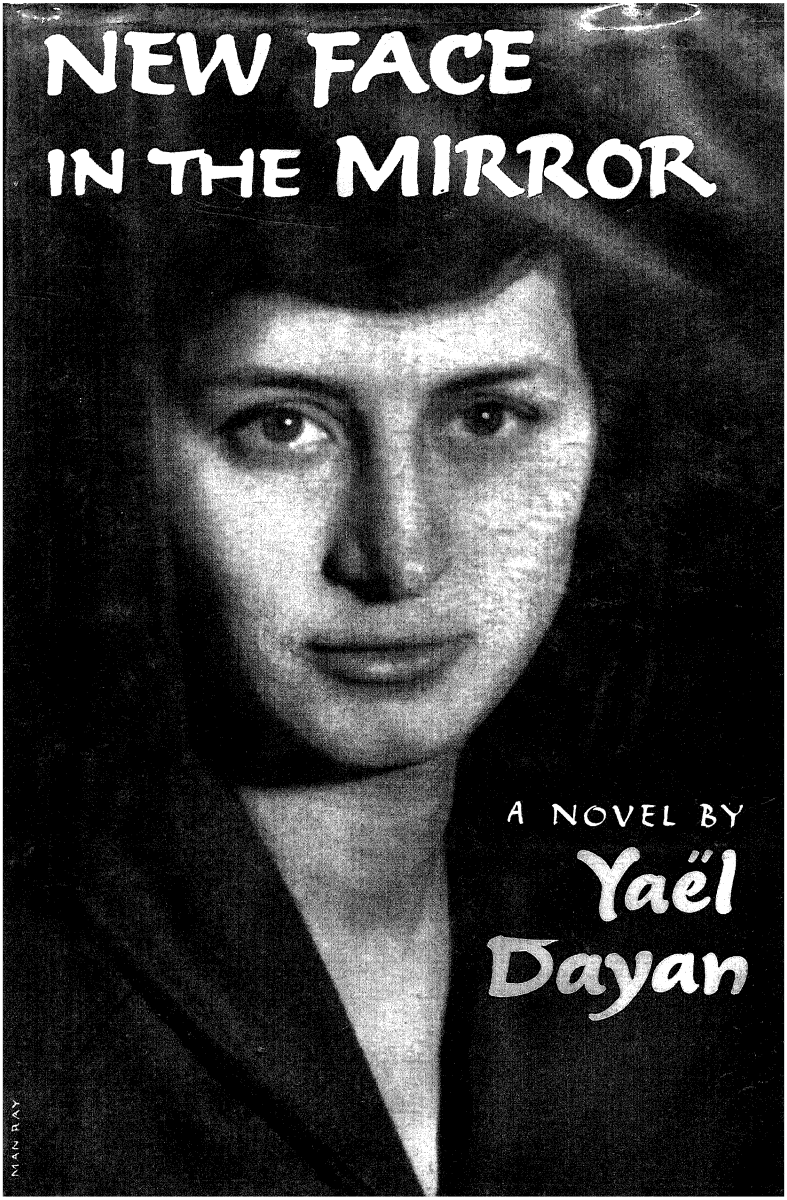
NEW FACE IN THE MIRROR



A NOVEL BY

Yaël Dayan

MAN RAY

THE "new face" on the jacket of this book is the face of Yaël Dayan (pronounced YAH-èl dah-YAHN), a twenty-year-old writer who is older than the country in which she was born. She is the daughter of the former Commander in Chief of the Israeli Army, General Moshe Dayan, and recently completed her two years of service in the army of her country.

New Face in the Mirror is the story of Ariel Ron, a proud and arrogant daughter of a famous colonel, who enters her two-year period of conscription determined to keep her personality inviolate, to remain aloof though obedient, emotionally uninvolved in the intense experiences of army life, and, above all, to retain fiercely her strong sense of individuality and superiority. *"I'm Ariel Ron – not 361950!" I wanted to scream my name – scream it at the sobbing girl, the sergeant, at all of them. I'm Ariel Ron and nothing else.* In her relationships with her family, and with the many young men attracted by her unusual beauty and vivacity, Ariel attempts to play the role of master, coolly manipulating people's affections while at the same time remaining withdrawn from

(continued on back flap)

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NEW FACE IN THE MIRROR

YAËL DAYAN

New Face in the Mirror

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To My Parents

NEW FACE IN THE MIRROR

THIS IS MY HOUSE: white paint, timbered ceilings, big living room with an open fireplace and a few small bedrooms upstairs. The key really turns in its lock and closes the world behind me. My suitcases are unpacked, the lights switched on; a small fire slowly blows into damp wood, and I sip a glass of wine.

I open a window. A salty, cold draft of air, very fresh, awakens me and the fire, bringing the sound of the sea into the room, filling the corners with noise and freshness. The baby scream of the wind is lost in the bellowing of the waves; the rocky cliffs echo the sound, and the first drops of rain against the windowpanes complete the harmony.

Opposite my cottage is a lighthouse, its beam flashing seaward, although not even the bravest sailor would go to sea tonight. The flash of light revolves, striking at brief intervals through the window, through the glass, and through the curtains. There is no escape, no hiding from it; it searches mechanically, confidently, permanently. Against the music of waves and wind and rain it becomes the unchanging reality, the something that cannot be disturbed, ignoring everything and me, too; and yet pausing for a second against the glass of the window, glowing against the surface of the wine glass, in the wine itself, on the metal of the pen; static for a moment, then passing on and away; but coming back again, and back again . . .

The light has a steadfast, binding quality. The sounds can change, and do change; the rain can stop. The wine gets

finished and I get out of my chair, go to the kitchen, and make tea. But the beam of light is just the same; with unchanging regularity it strikes deeper into me each time. I begin to feel it inside me. There is no way of getting friendly with it, but, to be frank, there is no use hiding from it. It is a discreet beam that carries things away; it sweeps off layers to engulf them in the sea, or set them down on the shores of some island, or pile them high up on a cloud.

A thought strikes me: this unfriendly beam, and the beating of the rain against the window; the revolving beam striking the window, and the rain beating . . . I remember them from long ago. Long? . . . two years . . . an eternity . . .

The revolving shaft of light from the lighthouse in Finistère, against the Atlantic, reminds me of the long, steady beam behind Tel Aviv. Two years ago, at the end of the Sinai War, it was searching for aircraft, or directing them on their way, and intermittently lighting up the inside of a big army barracks. A long and narrow room with two long rows of hard, narrow beds, covered with tightly stretched khaki blankets; the beam shining on the metal of guns, pausing at a tear in a girl's eye, quickly going on its way undisturbed by voice, smell, or look. . . .

I hated it at first; deeply, profoundly hated it from the moment I queued up to collect my equipment. The male stores orderly measured me with his eyes to decide the size of my clothes.

"I do not, definitely not, want underwear, or pajamas. I have my own."

"Sorry 361950, you've got to take them and sign for them all."

"My name is Ariel Ron. Shall I spell it for you?"

He turned, laughing.

"Hey, boys, the Colonel's daughter's here. She says she's got undies of her own."

I couldn't cry. I was ashamed but I couldn't cry. I collected

the things, thrust them into the kitbag, put on my beret, fixed on the disk with my number, 361950, and joined another queue for medical inspection.

The girl beside me in the queue was sobbing. She looked ugly, her face red and wet with tears. The girl behind me said, "She's superstitious. The trouble is her number doesn't end with eight and she says that means bad luck."

The girl who spoke to me said she had a cream bun she was willing to share. I didn't feel like cream buns; the thought made me feel sick. But I tried to look calm and knowledgeable, as if I belonged where I was. A voice shouted a number through the microphone:

"361950!"

And then repeated it angrily:

"361950!"

A short, stocky sergeant came up and pushed me.

"That's your number. What are you waiting for?"

"I'm Ariel Ron. I've got a name. He can say it, can't he?"

"No, he can't."

I wanted to scream my name—scream it at the sobbing girl, the girl with the bun, the sergeant, at all of them. I'm Ariel Ron and nothing else. But what did they care? I longed to tear off my number, put on my dress, turn about, and leave.

Instead I got into an army truck with twenty or thirty other girls, all squared into uniform, hair tied up two inches above the collar. Hardly knowing why, I moved my lips and joined in the ditty they were singing:

Give us some food,
Our throats are so dry,
The army is good,
Day comes after night.

The truck hurried through strange groves—green and gold. Tel Aviv was behind us now, and at the gate of the camp the driver shouted, "Fresh meat!"

Trucks, equipment stores, queues, queues . . .

"361950, that's your bed. No private belongings here. And in exactly five minutes you will report at the lecture hall."

Back from the lecture hall I sat on the edge of my bed, bare to the inquiring eyes of the other girls, whose efforts to draw me into conversation failed, so that one by one they decided to ignore me.

Next to me on the bed lay my gun— "You are not to lose sight of your gun for a moment. It must become part of you."

My hand recoiled as I touched the cold metal.

I took off my uniform, hung it as and where I had been told, and disregarding the noise around me slipped into bed. Two sheets, smaller than the mattress, rough blankets; and the gun next to me, so close that I could feel each of its curves, and slowly getting warmer as I clutched it to my body.

I built myself a kind of tent with the blankets. Inside it was dark and warm. The disk with my number on it between my breasts was no longer cold, the gun was not disturbing. I was alone inside the tent, alone with my thoughts, the sound of driving rain, and the muted noise of voices coming from another world.

"Then we kissed good-by, and he held me tightly and said, 'Be a good girl.' "

"Did you cry?"

"Can't you see she's crying now?"

"When do we get our first leave?"

"I'm terrified of shooting. Do you think I can get out of it?"

Then a harsh voice calling, "Lights out!"

The girls' voices sank to whispers. But every now and then the beam of the searchlight broke through and lit up the room.

"Hey, Ariel!"

I turned towards the voice. It came from the bed on my left, occupied by Leah, a rich, spoiled girl, a silk nightgown under her army pajamas and forbidden lipstick smeared on for the night.

"Ariel, what shall I do with this?" She pointed with a gesture of disgust at her gun.

"It's not 'this.' It's a gun, and it's yours . . . O.K. Give it to me. And go to sleep and let me get to sleep too."

"You're very kind. Thanks."

And so to the collection of objects in my bed I added another long-barreled gun, next to mine. I could feel them through my pajamas, where I could warm them and get used to them.

But sleep was far away. Everything had happened too quickly: the war in Sinai, the hurried return from the United States, the welcome at the airport, and now the army. The army for two years, two whole years, 24 months, 730 days, 730 nights. Long nights, cold and wet, or hot and sweaty. And this was only the first of them.

The whole thing seemed so ugly to me: all these half-women, half-children . . . if they could only be struck dumb for a few weeks. But this hour at least was mine. I tossed the blanket aside, put on a coat, hung my own gun on my shoulder, hid Leah's under the mattress, and went outside. I needed air and a drink of water. I realized how funny I must have looked: boots with no socks, the gun hanging upside down to keep the rain out of the barrel, a greatcoat, and the metal clatter of the disks round my neck.

In the darkness I heard, "Halt! Give the password!"

"To hell with you. I'm looking for water. I'm Ariel Ron of Company C." And I walked on.

"Halt, or I'll shoot!"

"Shoot away but let me get some water first."

Two girls came up to me, wrapped in heavy raincoats, looking sleepy and more scared by my appearance than I was by their threatening to shoot me. I gave them my number and as I walked away I heard one of them saying, "Does she think that because she's the daughter of the Area Commander she needn't know the password?"

I had my drink, breathed the wet air, and went back to bed.

The night seemed as long as the beam of the searchlight. "Good night, 361950," I murmured and presently fell asleep.

I woke up with a start. It was still raining, and my hands were holding the two guns so tightly that they hurt. I had had a dream in which my uniform walked empty of me or of anyone. It was neat and straight but my body was not there, and it marched to the rhythm of metal disks ringing. The gun was hanging on the sleeve but all at once it fell, and the uniform failed to reach for it. Then, although the ringing of the disks grew louder, the uniform folded on its own and the gun fell deeper and deeper, and a voice was screaming, "Imma! Mother! Imma!"

I sat up quickly in my bed. It was the girl next to me screaming in her sleep. Her face looked troubled and wrinkled, as if fighting some horror.

The first light of dawn had brightened the room, picking out the rows of beds with the strangely wrapped figures on them, bundles with forms distorted by the outline of a gun in bed with them. A girl was muttering something in her sleep about a new dress. The one next to her snored. The room was filled with the heavy smell of bodies, sinking into the humidity of the air. I got out of bed and opened a window. The fresh air mixed with rain made me feel better.

I felt strangely alone here, with scores of people pressing in upon me, and everything strange and foreign to me. Did each of these girls feel alone? And whom did they think about when they felt so? Would I get used to it?

The air grew colder. Even in bed, under the heavy but unwarming blankets, I felt myself shivering. Those around me were sleeping, and I envied them.

Then the door snapped open and the short sergeant marched in, wide awake and full of energy. Clapping her hands and walking briskly through the room she said, "Good morning, everybody. Five minutes to morning exercises," and she pulled at blankets and patted shoulders.

I dressed quickly and prepared to face the first day. The dormitory was not a pleasant sight—all those sleepy faces, some creamed and even painted, all shivering in the cold, some of them trying to win another minute of warmth under the blankets, all of them in need of a good wash and a combing—they had looked so different two days ago. I took my gun, handed my neighbor hers, and went out into the morning.

It was gray outside at five o'clock; a gray sky, and beneath it, uniforms. I look square in my uniform, my face becomes small and round, and I have to tie my long hair back. Only at night can I let it down the way I like it.

The khaki makes my skin look green, and my eyes greener than usual; the beret on my head seems to emphasize that I am nothing but a number. But slowly I will learn to appreciate this lack of identity and to sink into it, relaxing. It will make me feel more important because, in being forced to be like all the others, I will become more conscious of my superiority.

I began to plan my days with small inventions of my own—timesavers. I took my toothbrush to breakfast and washed on the way back from the dining hall. I cleaned and greased my gun in the evening and wrapped it in a towel. I slept with my clothes on, and a sweater over them, and stretched and fixed the sheets under the blanket so that when I got up in the morning the bed looked freshly made for inspection and I could take a book and sit in the empty canteen with time on my hands.

I avoided taking an interest in "them"— the rest of the Company. I did my work and found the physical training tolerable except when it was wet. When it was raining, or after heavy showers, our exercises included crawling through mud. The wetness penetrated our uniforms to the skin, our slacks got filthy, and to make matters worse, we realized as we crawled that the slacks would have to be washed in icy water. I'd lean

on my elbows and try not to touch the damp soil, and then, when my muscles tired, I'd just give up.

But the most unpleasant parts of the day were those given to mass activities such as eating or washing. The food was good, but the process of getting it took away my appetite. We had to queue for it—stand in a long line with hungry faces and clattering mess-tins—and then have quantities of potatoes, gravy, pickles, and jam piled into the same mess-tin. After carrying it to the crowded dining room I had to listen to a dozen stupid versions of the day's adventures. Unless I was first in line I preferred not to eat in the mess room but went alone to the canteen for coffee and biscuits. There I thought about a home, not my parents', but mine. One day I would have a table and cook a meal . . . these domestic thoughts had never occurred to me before. Taking a shower was like eating. The cubicles were small and we had to undress in a waiting room and stay there until a cubicle was vacant.

I went once to queue for a shower, but only once. The shapeless figures pushing and pawing each other, the sly remarks followed by shrill laughter were too much for me. I felt sorry for some of the shy girls, standing in corners and waiting modestly their turn. The night after my group shower I dreamed about it. I was there again, with the long lines of naked bodies; each naked girl was soaping the back of the girl in front of her. I was fully dressed, vainly struggling to tear myself away from a girl who insisted on soaping my back, too.

After that I went to the shower late at night, when I could be alone, take my time, let the water slowly relieve me of the day's dirt, and enjoy the roughness of the towel. I took off my identity disks and for a moment, in my nakedness, felt far away from it all.

The days went quickly and I did my best to avoid becoming involved. There were moments of shame, some amusement, and a lot to be observed. I grew to like my gun. It was mine, a

loyal, secure friend. I carried on long conversations with it, in which I was absolutely frank and truthful.

The best part of the week was the night watch. The others could not understand why I chose the lonely vigil; they were always trying to escape it. I awaited my turn eagerly.

"She's showing off," they said.

But it was good to be alone in a heavy winter coat, with a gun and the password. I half hoped that something would happen. All night I would find myself daydreaming of a little house with a pigeon-loft and a high wall round it. I would tell myself how nice it was that the moon was not full, because if it had been I would have felt like crying. Autumn moons should be full only when everything is really good, or really bad, not when there is sadness or a feeling of emptiness in the heart. The ring around the moon would get wider and wider somehow, and I would stare at it and think that if it got much wider it would be too wide for a crown. One night watch, while I was fighting sleep, I saw a beautiful sight—a cat silhouetted against the moonlit sky, standing erect on a fallen tree trunk. It was not afraid. I think it was a tomcat, angry with the moon, or perhaps only cold; but there we were, both staring at the light.

Things like this meant a lot to me in an environment where I looked in the mirror and didn't like what I saw, or looked about me and didn't like the sight of the other square shapes. Here where I was a number, and had escaped into it, and yet was fighting for identity—in that environment I could search for something among the clouds and in the moon. It was a kind moon, appeasing the cat. I could not tell what color the cat was.

I never thought about anything important on watches; it was thinking with the senses, slowly looking at shapes and figures, concentrating on smells and sounds; aloneness, not in thought, but in being; a lack of reality, no sense of place or time. I was disturbed occasionally by the laughing face of Gal, my brother, who came and stood near me, behind the barbed wire,

and then disappeared, like the cat; or the sound of trucks on the main road; or the smell of oranges carried in and away again by the changing wind.

I found free time in the barracks difficult to bear. Why do girls shout so much? What a noise they made in that big room, singing and crying and gossiping—a spiraling whirl of more or less human voices, fading away, coming back, voices attacking or defending, voices that separated themselves from the speakers and flowed automatically into the whirl on their own. And always the shameless reading aloud of letters.

"What did he write today?"

"He still loves me. Listen—'I keep your last kiss alive on my lips until our next one. Every night I hold you in my arms.' "

A hundred eyes stared at the face of the reader. Without wanting it, I found myself swept into the listening group.

" 'When you come on leave I'll make you a General.' "

"Stop it!"

Once I shouted these words to the reader of an intimate letter and then ran out of the room.

"She never writes letters," someone said of me, later. "She gets some, but never reads any of them to us."

I didn't get many letters. Before I went into the army I told my friends not to bother to write, there was no need for letters and anyway I wasn't going far and wouldn't be away for long, and letters to and from army camps become so sentimental. . . .

But I watched eagerly every day for the post to come, although I felt that my eagerness was a sign of weakness. And how thirstily I drank in the written word when it came, and with what effort held back a tear while reading a letter from my brother Gal.

The first time I realized that being the daughter of the Area Commander made a difference was in the kitchen. It was my turn for kitchen duty. I tried to do all duties calmly, obediently,

and thoroughly, even though I felt that I was doing the world a favor. I marched into the large kitchen and there in the corner were the cooks whispering to each other. I approached them with my hands in my pockets, looking serious and holding myself erect.

"What am I to do?"

The head cook winked with pleasure.

"Ah, at last! Colonel Ron's daughter is actually going to work in my kitchen. Well, I've left the biggest and dirtiest pots for you to scrub."

He roared with loud, stupid laughter as though celebrating the accomplishment of his life's purpose. Then he took me to an adjoining room and stopped in front of a pile of huge black containers, smeared with grease and covered with the remains of food. There was enough work for at least four of us.

I stared at him with contempt and said, "Leave me alone."

"What? Leave you and miss the sight?"

I ignored him and began working. The water was cold and it was almost impossible to get the grease off the pots. I wanted to run away and take a hot bath somewhere. But I stuck to it as if my life depended on doing the job thoroughly. I spent the whole day cleaning and polishing the black, hideous metal. What hurt me most was the thought that if I told my father he would laugh and dismiss the whole thing as of no importance.

Some of the other girls were sympathetic towards me, and I heard one say, "She really doesn't deserve it."

I vowed never again to eat from those pots, and when the day's work was done I went off on my own for several hours, resting with a bad headache. But it was several days before I could rid my nostrils of the smell of grease.

One day my father came to the camp. He said he was passing and had decided to drop in. He would never have admitted that he had come to see me. His arrival was, of course, an event—an occasion for smart and often unnecessary salutes, for alert and curious eyes. Will he kiss her when he leaves? What do you

suppose they're talking about? Will she tell him about the kitchen?

My father and I spoke briefly. I hated it, really, and yet it was good to know that he was my father. I tried to look relaxed and natural, but could not help feeling excited. I looked like my father, and now I tried hard to live up to that. We walked along, both of us in uniform, hands in pockets, serious in manner, heads up, completely self-assured and aloof as though we were discussing state secrets.

I was relieved when he left and busied myself distributing the sweets he brought me to the girls. They were bubbling with compliments. "He's so handsome." "You *do* look nice together." I knew that he was handsome and that we looked nice together, but there was a lot that the girls didn't know. They didn't know that it was the Commander who had visited me, and not my father.

One day I fell ill. It was nothing much but I had a couple of days' rest in the "sickroom." It was an ugly place, but there were flowers there and some sort of a painting on the wall. It was less uniform than the rest of the barracks. I ate in my room, and the girls in my Company were allowed to visit me after training hours. I fidgeted when they were there and tried to convince myself that they bored me, but I knew that if they hadn't come I would have been hurt. One of them cried by my bedside. She was a girl I liked and to whom I had been friendly, and now she said she was homesick. Her name was Rachel. She was a newcomer to the country and rather simple and uneducated. Hers was a large Oriental family, and they hated the idea of her being drafted into the army with "all kinds of girls." Rachel loved her gun which she called "my husband," and gave it the time that others gave to writing letters. She cleaned and polished it until it shone like a jewel, and it always pleased me to hear her praised on parade for the way she kept it. It was the

first time she had ever had anything that was utterly her own, and under her sole care.

I thought it odd that one's motherly, fatherly, young womanly feelings should be lavished on a 4-kg. gun.

In the sickroom she sat beside my bed and talked about her family. She had thought, once, that she was in love. She had gone with the boy to a cinema and he had tried to kiss her hand. That night she had been unable to sleep. She had told her brother about it and he had forbidden her to see the boy again.

She said she wanted to write to the boy but was ashamed of her spelling mistakes and asked me to write the letter for her.

I said that I would, and I did, trying to be calm and objective. Rachel was so simple and so real that I was startled in a way and subdued. She asked me to say that she loved the army. I wrote, "She likes being among so many friends. She loves her gun. The food is good and the Company Commander is a wonderful, understanding, motherly woman." When I had finished she said she wanted to add something herself, and in square, straight, childlike letters she spelled out, "I have a best friend here, Ariel. I love her very much. She is very helpful to me." I saw what she had written. When I told her that I wasn't feeling well, she left me, her eyes shining with gratitude.

When she had gone I felt so ashamed that my shame almost choked me. Me good and helpful? Hadn't she noticed that I was only strong-willed and calculating? Besides, I didn't want love, I wanted respect. A small bird came to the window. Its beady eyes seemed to be mocking me and I pulled the blanket over my head and tried to sleep.

Towards the end of our time as recruits the girls in the Company became nervous and difficult. Some money was stolen, and then a sweater and towels. They began blaming each other and looking among the bedclothes. I would have hit anyone who tried to approach my bed.

The evening of the day the money was missed was thoroughly nasty. After the officers had gone, a hundred eyes gleamed with excitement. Tongues spat out accusing words.

"You're a thief!"

"You! With your dyed hair, you Turkish prostitute!"

There was no gunfire but the room was like a battlefield, with things flying all over the place. Curses and insults were flung about wildly. There was hair-pulling and fisticuffs. Then one of them pointed at Rachel, who had been sitting quietly and taking no part in the battle.

"She's the one! She needed that money!"

They all looked at Rachel, who looked from them to me with tears in her eyes. Until then I had been half amused, but now I stood up and stepped forward, a cigarette in my mouth and a book in my hand.

"Anyone want to repeat that?" I asked.

Nobody said anything. They moved slowly away.

In a way that incident symbolized my peculiar position in the Company. The girls didn't like me and didn't feel at ease with me, but they couldn't ignore me. At critical moments I always seemed to be there, and my motives were not theirs. They could never understand why I did, or did not, do things. I was secretly jealous of most of them and often wished that I, too, could feel and not merely think, dream and not merely plan, desire impulsively and not merely want demandingly. I found myself wishing that I could talk as freely as they, and write "Dearly beloved parents, I miss you very much. . . ." instead of "Dear Father and Mother, everything here is all right. . . ."

But I fought against my envies. I felt that they were a weakness that had to be overcome. My aim was to be strong and indifferent—and I believed that I really was!

At night, when they whispered good night to fathers, mothers, or boy friends, I said a short prayer to my own god, the god of the strong.

Of course men were a great attraction in the camp. Feet

would run swiftly to the barbed-wire fence when a group of male recruits marched by. The cooks, the lorry drivers, the armorer, the man who sold chocolate at the canteen, even the men on the covers of magazines, magnetized the girls. In their free time they discussed love in all its details, and brought out forbidden books about love-making.

I too missed the company of men: a stroking hand, a compliment, a good-night kiss, a firm embrace that would make me feel a baby again.

Field training came as a welcome change. It was tougher than anything we had done before, but I soon discovered that the more arduous the exercises, the more interest I felt and the more privacy I got. There was something very good about a full day in which every moment had been planned for us. There was no need to think; we were simply machines reacting to buttons pressed by someone else. As long as we reacted promptly and efficiently, nothing of ourselves need be invested in the performance. The degree of mortal effort required was small. If we tried to move in any direction other than the one fixed by the rules, the whole machine would break down. Each one of us was only a screw. I determined to be a clever screw.

We walked something like twenty-five miles to our tents. It made me feel good and alive, and I found myself singing marches and carrying two guns as easily as one. I was conscious of my feet and of the sweat under my arms and between my fingers as the winter sun beat down on us. At moments like these one feels one's body, is aware of its action, of the muscles as they ache, of the breasts heavy under a tight brassiere, and of hunger.

We got to some sandy hill with a ruined house on top, a few small tents, and trees that served as a natural latrine. I shared a tent with Judy. She was a shy, round-faced girl, who could be gentle but also strong-willed.

All around us were sandhills, which made it easy to get down

on my stomach and crawl, but left me itching from grains of sand that worked their way through my clothes to my skin, settled in my ammunition pouch and in my hair. For the rest of the day I tried hard to get rid of the stuff. We went a week without washing, slept with our boots on, spent hours picking the sand from our guns, which were far from sandproof. By day there were flies everywhere—flies in the soup, flies in the tea; at night the buzz and bite of mosquitoes in the small, warm, overcrowded tents.

Clear nights followed bright days, and night training became, in its turn, a relief from day training. On night exercises nobody could talk. We became long, shadowy columns of silent figures, heads heavy with cap and helmet, minds light as feathers, souls far away with the stars we had learned to recognize. And all around us was the sound of grasshoppers, of the wind blowing sand among the dry grass, of dogs barking somewhere in the distance, of feet crushing small branches across the path, and of leaves rustling.

At a whistle, fifty girls lay as close to the earth as they could get, so that it felt part of them as their bodies adjusted to irregularities of the ground. Their guns were like another arm or leg. I would find myself wishing that I could stay there, on the ground and in the darkness forever.

When the whistle blew again we would rise and run forward in silence.

I remembered things at night—a whirl of memories like dry leaves caught in a wind and charmed into a motionless moment. I remembered other nights and other stars, the night sky above Jerusalem where the stars are said to be lowest, the starlight in a village, on a ship, against a beach, or against soft grass. As I ran, faces and words came to me— "I do love you, you look magnificent in that dress . . ." "What a quiet voice you have, and you let your hair grow long . . ." "You're a nasty, bitchy girl really, and I'm afraid of loving you . . ." "Come closer, please do, your warmth feels so good."

Faces, words . . . then a whistle and down again, heavy, cold, sweaty, dirty, and the long march back to the tents for a few hours' sleep.

The last night of my field training I was put on guard, and sat alone eating oranges and trying to write a poem. The poem became too sentimental, a kind of confession, in which reality and time seemed to melt away, always disappearing and not being there any more, their passing unnoticed until they had gone.

Field training came at the end of our period as recruits. Next came the ceremony of swearing allegiance. It took place in the early evening. We were dressed in our dark winter uniforms, the berets on our heads already beginning to feel as if they belonged there. We went on parade as night began to fall. Nobody spoke, but our minds were active.

There was plenty to think about. I asked myself, Do I love my country? What an odd question. I feel no conflict. There is no Ariel versus Israel problem just as there really isn't a father-daughter problem. One loves one's country, good or bad. I knew that night that wherever I might find myself there would always be the firm, unbreakable root holding me to this piece of land.

But did it need tension, war, and danger to provoke my love for the country?

Left-right, left-right. Our steps echoed back from the paved road.

It's strange, I thought, one can generalize about a country, and about love of one's country, when perhaps it is one's village one loves—the stones along which one ran barefoot, the secret place in the wood close to the school, the view from a window. "Right-left, right-left," the Lieutenant's voice sounded. But there is one's country. I felt it intensely here in the camp. It may have been silly, but something inside me moved proudly as the whole company sang lustily of "love for the homeland." I

had felt the same when I heard a military airplane; and when my father was on parade taking the salute, and I could see the twinkle in his eyes; even when I stood and watched some of these empty-headed girls holding guns in hands that had been soft and neatly manicured, and carefully aiming at their targets—it did move me. *Left-right, left-right.* Or when, in the evening, Tamar taught Rachel to write Hebrew.

Left-right. We marched on through a country so small that in a day we could travel through it—small and tense. Perhaps my love for it is the feel of the newspapers in the morning, the reading of psalms at the Friday night ceremony in the camp, the widening of eyes at the view in the wild deserts of the Negev or of the green, lush slopes of the mountains of Galilee.

At last we arrived at the parade ground. It was lit by torches, their flames moving in the soft night breeze. We stood in formation and, at a signal, began to repeat the oath:

> "I swear to be loyal to the Army . . . to do all that may be necessary for my country even to sacrificing my life. . . ."

I paused for a second between the words. I wanted to be sure of each word and to know that I was saying it in awareness and faith . . . "even to sacrificing my life. . . ."

Ruth, the dark-skinned girl with small, black curls, took the oath; so did blond Polish Bertha; and small Yemenite Hannah with her white teeth and strange accent; and so did rich Tel Avivian Leah. My eyes were wet. I tried hard to stop the tears but strong, indifferent Ariel had failed. I was ashamed to love these people, just because they were my people, and ashamed of the pride I felt in them. I wished I was alone. My father, and perhaps only he, would have understood the way I felt.

A narrow moon was the only witness of my tears, and then it was over and we marched back to camp. Only two days to go as a recruit, some more shooting, a talk with the Commander, and then, the last day: inspection, farewells, and some leave of absence.

I never got used to the noise of guns and always had to close my eyes when a shot was fired, and there were many. I shot well and was not afraid of my weapon. Shooting stirred my competitive spirit, but I could never avoid thinking that by pressing the trigger like that, *crack!* I could kill a person—someone like my brother, or Gad, or Dan, or the truck driver over there. That was how my uncle had been killed and my father badly wounded in the arm. Could I shoot a man if I had to? What would it be like if a human being stood in front of me instead of the passive, static target? Many of the girls spoke fearfully of the prospect, but their terror was often unreal. I realized that later when I myself commanded recruits. It was a question of getting used to the gun, not to the prospect of shooting someone with it. Most of the girls under my command soon took their target practice as calmly as they took guard duties, washing pots in the kitchen, or physical training at five-thirty in the morning.

But hand-grenade training was a strange experience. It was the most impressive thing I ever held between my five fingers, like holding death in strong, sweaty fingers which longed only to be rid of it as quickly as possible. It was not that I feared it; rather, it amazed me, held me fascinated and terrified. So much depended on the slight movement of my hand: my hand, Ariel's hand, not the hand of the daughter of Colonel Ron, or of the brilliant university student, or of the ornament of social gatherings; just me, for better or for worse, me and my five fingers.

On the last afternoon I had a routine interview with the recruit commander. I marched into her office and saluted. She was a woman I had known fairly well before I joined the army, and she knew my family very well. I decided to be as brief and as formal as she would let me.

"Sit down, Ariel."

I said nothing and took off my beret.

In a quiet voice she said, "What *is* the matter?"

"Nothing." I looked at her, surprised.

"I know you better than that. You haven't made a single friend here. You've been a perfectly good soldier but, in a way, a dead one. You haven't really taken part in anything. You've put on superior airs. What frightens you?"

"I'm not frightened. I'm simply not interested."

"Is it your father?"

"Father? Heavens no. What's he got to do with it? Anyway, isn't that a private matter?"

"If you like. But you had better realize that for the next two years, what happens to you, good and bad, and especially the important things, will depend on you alone, Ariel, not on Ariel Ron the daughter of the Area Commander. I suppose you want to go to cadet school?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Why?"

The question was unexpected. I murmured something about my ability to handle serious army matters, my education . . . I didn't want to become a field officer, training others. I wanted some kind of a staff job where more important matters were sorted out.

"I'll send you to cadet school on one condition," said the Commander, "that when you become an officer you do at least one period of recruit training, here in this camp. It may surprise you to hear this, but I shall envy the recruits under you. Now you can go."

I saluted and marched out.

An odd person, I thought to myself. Me, a lieutenant training recruits? The poor devils will probably suffer because I'll never get interested in them, or anxious about how they turn out. But I hadn't been given much choice.

The last day whirled itself into one big rush. There were skirts to press, guns to polish, things to pack, addresses to write. At

last I sat in a corner waiting for my mother and brother to fetch me.

"Will your father come too?" the girls kept asking me.

"I don't know. He's a busy man."

I would have been hurt if he had not come, but he did, he and my mother, and Gal. They stayed for the inspection, the dinner, the farewell party, and when I got to bed I was so tired I could hardly think about the next morning, the free morning.

But it came, and with it a slight, drizzling rain. I took my kitbag, said good-by to the M.P. at the gate, and kept fingering the leave-pass in my upper left-hand pocket. Outside the gate everything seemed strange, curiously free, and somehow a little hard and frightening. For a moment I almost wished I was back in the security of the barracks.

I was angry with the street I lived in. Nothing had changed. The same shops, the same people, the same flaunting newspapers, the whole atmosphere was exactly as it had always been. And nobody noticed that I had changed. Everyone walked past me as if I were an ordinary person, as if I were what I had been before.

I was one of the crowd. They were used to seeing women soldiers, and didn't turn their heads as I passed. All those long, sleepless nights, the marching along unpaved roads, cold gray dawns, orders carried out in the rain; and the dreams of my first leave, and being welcomed, with turned heads and whispers: "She's a soldier!" I wanted them to know what I had been through, to win their sympathy, perhaps their respect.

I had invested in blind obedience, in being one of a crowd, anonymous and without identity. Now I was getting nothing in return—not an admiring remark, not even a smile of sympathy.

The street looked long, remote, terribly civilian, thoughtless, without order and far away from me. I felt lonely and joyless and hated the army camp that had made me different.

I stopped for a moment in front of our house. Would my family be like the people in the street? Did they know I was coming home today? Of course. I had written to them, hadn't I?

The house was empty. Our maid looked me up and down and, as usual, asked if I wanted food. I didn't take off my uniform but sat at the table and touched the plate and the clean tablecloth. I was not hungry but I wanted to eat at a table all by myself, with food I liked handed to me.

The door opened and I held my breath. Father? No, it was my mother. She was glad to see me.

"Why don't you take those funny things off?"

It was a simple remark, reasonable even, but acutely provoking. For weeks I had been hoping that when I got home they would say, "You look all right." I had pressed the uniform, brushed the hat, polished the shoes, and now "funny things." It was even worse than the indifference in the street.

I wanted to fight with someone, anyone, just to feel myself. I wanted to be difficult, a problem, somebody and not just a number—somebody. I gave Mother a hard stare.

"They're not funny. I like them and I'll keep them on."

"I *am* sorry. I didn't mean to annoy you. Perhaps you need some sleep. Shall I turn down the bed?"

"No, thanks. I'm going out."

She was being motherly again, turning down the bed for me—I preferred to believe that it was an act put on for the occasion. It was easier that way; I didn't have to respond. It was unfair of me, of course, and I knew she meant it, but to hell with it! I didn't want sleep. I wanted attention, a lot of it, enough to fill the gap of the six long weeks behind me. Attention to me, Ariel, not to Recruit Number 361950.

Then I heard running steps behind me. I felt little fingers around my waist and turned to be kissed and hugged by my small brother Gal. His eyes were shining, his hair uncombed, and he was joyous and excited.

"You look beautiful like this. You look even nicer than

Daddy. When will you be an officer? What was it like? Did you shoot much?"

We walked along the road hand in hand, he smiling proudly as if saying to the world, "Look! My sister is a soldier!" I talked, half to him, half to myself, telling him all about it. He said, "You know, Ariel, I've decided never to be a recruit. I'll become an officer at once, perhaps a general."

"Of course, Gal, of course."

We turned back to the house. My father's car was not outside the door so I knew he was not at home. But a few minutes later I heard his step on the terrace. I could never help holding my breath, or momentarily stopping my thoughts at the sound of his footsteps. Heavy, sure steps, making their own path, a special private path, full of confidence, and yet so formal and frightening. Even my mother, who had heard it for years, froze for a moment at the sound.

He glanced into the room, called hello, gave us his usual kiss and a casual "How are you?" That was all. His face was like a wax mask, the eyes staring but passing beyond me, not resting on any definite object, a hard face, without welcome, hiding his thoughts.

I looked back, concentrating in my eyes all the co-operation in the world. Please say something, pretend to be interested, ask me something. Instead, his eyes swiftly ranged the room and he said, "You don't mind if I leave you by yourselves, do you? I've something I must look up."

He walked heavily away, creating a sense of distance, of strangeness, of unreality, so that every minute he had been with us became a disillusionment, the usual vanishing dream of unfulfilled hope. It was always like that. He would come in smiling and we would unite in an effort to sustain his mood, beginning sentences and ending them according to the amount of interest he showed. Suddenly he would turn away, superior and aloof, and we would be left feeling like fools who have got what they deserve.

When he is moody he never raises his voice but simply ignores everyone. Then we wrap ourselves in silence, think up reasons for going away, exchange quick looks and hasty whispers—"What's the matter with him?"—and try not to be noticed in corners of the house or in the garden; to keep out of his way.

And yet I liked it. He was the only person I ever feared, and he gave me standards to live up to. Often I got excited about things, fearing his reaction to this or that, and then suddenly it would occur to me that he wouldn't pay the slightest attention. I would have been confused if he was different, if he asked about my movements. I could not imagine his taking more interest than he did. It would have made him smaller if he showed concern for all the unimportant things I did and went through. He was a challenge to me, for I knew that I was like him and yet not as strong. I was always looking for weak points in his character and discovering angrily that I liked his faults and even, secretly, tried to imitate them.

He was the justification for the many things I did which I knew to be wrong. I convinced myself that he would have done the same; I preferred to think of the few good things I did as unconnected with him.

Here I was at home, on leave from the army. I took off my uniform and wrapped a silk robe round me. I sensed it fully, enjoying the curves of my body that showed through it. I went hopefully to the wardrobe but was bitterly disappointed. It was filled with the sort of clothes I had just taken off: khaki shirts, sweaters, and berets like mine, hung in rows. I thought enviously of Rachel. She had gone to a home where her uniform would be distinctive in the wardrobe, the only one; it would give her the feeling of difference that I wanted.

There were two evening dresses in the wardrobe. I hung my uniform between them, but it looked out of place. I rolled it into a bundle and put it in the laundry basket. Forget about it, I told myself. A hot bath seemed the proper place for thinking.

I ran the bath, got into it, and lost myself in the water, letting it carry me away in warmth. I realized that one way of becoming important is to antagonize. My parents didn't mind whether I was in the army or out of it or anywhere else; nobody did. I would have to fight to be noticed, praise the army to those who suspected I disliked it, be full of grumbles to anyone who thought I liked it. And I would find a weakness in my father and use it to drag him down from his Olympus. I remembered that I still had Dan to see that evening. I was sure he would appreciate my point of view.

The bath helped me. I felt new and ready for anything. The towel was soft. I looked at myself approvingly in the mirror: straight features, small nose, the mouth a trifle mocking, top lip curving upwards with never a full smile, always a doubting one. And I was proud to see a likeness to my father. My hair, curling at the end, fell loosely to my shoulders. I wished I was taller but I liked my figure. I dressed in the check dress Dan liked, went downstairs, got the car key from my mother, and drove away. Before I left the house she said, "Where are you going?"

"Places."

"When will you be back?"

"Sometime."

They were used to answers like that.

The road was wet. I had not called Dan before setting out for his apartment. He would be surprised. I got there and climbed the many stairs, too many; they affect the first sentences spoken on arrival at the top. I had a key to the door and turned it slowly. Inside, I took off my coat and went into the living room. He was sitting there reading a book, very blond, very tall, with dark blue eyes, square chin, but somehow an indefinable, childish appearance.

I knew that he loved me. He was good for me in a comfortable way. He was easy, he admired me, my looks, my conversation. He was never bad-tempered—though this could be boring—and his apartment was a good place to visit, somewhere to be spoiled, to want things and get them.

He turned his head, saw me, and jumped up.

"My poor little soldier!"

"Very funny, aren't you? What's poor about me?"

He laughed. "Let me have a look at you," he said. "They haven't changed you at all. My same little Ariel."

"I'm not little at all, and anyway don't hold me so tightly. I'm tired."

"Tired? You should have seen me on my first leave. But I can't compare the two. We had it really tough."

(What do you know about it? You're a man. When you fall on your gun it's your chest that hits the ground, not a pair of breasts sensitized by the cold. Your hard skin isn't troubled by weight. You don't get red marks round the waist and shoulders where the belt and pack straps rub your skin with every step you take. Your strong hands can hold a rope when climbing without getting the ugly blisters I have. And you don't keep biting your lip. You only know women in small groups with make-up on, clean and laughing; you don't know a group of sixty troubled ones, nervous, being forcibly changed . . .)

He thought he had had it really tough!

I turned aside, saying, "Maybe you're right. But you see—"

"Ariel, don't let's talk about these dreary things. Let me get you a drink. Let's be as we were before. I want to tell you about a new book I've just got."

All at once without cause or reason, with no logic or thought to prompt me, I wanted to get away. I wanted to be silent. I wanted to be alone. I had been sitting, but now I stood up.

"Look, I've got to go. We can't be 'as before,' and I don't want to hear about your book."

I walked towards the door and with a gesture put my key

on a small table. As I opened the door, Dan called to me, "But Ariel, I love you. I beg you to stay."

I closed the door behind me, ran down the stairs and into the car, stepping hard on the accelerator. I wanted to drive as fast as I could, anywhere, along the broad beach, into the woods, through the town. Why had I left? To prove what? Strength? It is always easy to run away, much easier than to stay and face things. What things? What did you expect, Ariel? You didn't volunteer to join the army. You had to join up, like all the other girls of your age. What do you want people to do? Do you want the whole nation to thank you for doing what you were compelled to do? For going through a few weeks as a training recruit—to be called "my poor little soldier"? What *do* you want? I gave my usual answer: I want nothing of people; I want simply to be left alone.

When you are alone, Ariel, you want to be with people, to be admired, worshiped even—as long as the admirers and worshipers don't try to step out of the cage in which you have locked them, or move from the narrow path you have paved for them. How you envy your father! He really knows how to be alone. He loves solitude and needs it.

Be quiet, Ariel! Dan was not your type. You don't like being anybody's "poor little" anything. No, he was not your type, he was much too good for you. One day someone will hurt you and you will want to go back to Dan, to be loved. One day you may even be bored with getting your own way.

Ah, you will never be hurt. You ought to mix only with equals.

As I thought that the laughter inside me grew stronger and I said to myself: There are no equals.

I raced the car and as I did so I decided to go to Jerusalem, where I had rooms, tomorrow.

You need to feel, I told myself. You are afraid of feeling, and you need to feel. I began whistling, then singing, so as to stop this conversation with myself. I would put it off until tomorrow.

That was the easy way out. Anyway, people don't understand me. I smiled at the thought. They don't really deserve to understand me. They are too simple and naive.

I drew up in front of our house, which was dark, with everyone in it asleep. I went to my room, and in the dark changed into my nightgown, got into bed, and letting muscles and mind relax fell asleep.

Next morning I went to Jerusalem, arriving about noon. My small room was damp and cool. Here my uniform looked good in the narrow wardrobe. This was my world. Here I was queen and mistress of my life. No one could come in unless I invited him. It was a room full of secrets: curious objects hanging on the wall, a few good paintings, a lot of books, all read and many of them carefully studied. Here I could be myself. Even my parents had seen the room only once.

It was on the outskirts of Jerusalem, on the borders of the old city. A narrow path led between the two old walls, down some stairs, and to a green door—mine—opening on the basement.

The walls were hung with rosary beads, a large, colorful collection. The bed was very low because I hate high furniture; several Roman columns were used as chairs, and a large brass tray as a table. There was a skull my brother had given me, a large bunch of weeds—I loved the shadow they threw on the arched ceiling—and flowers. There was never enough light in the room, but being a cellar it was very cool in summer and warm in winter.

It was my world, the arched cupboards in the stone wall, hidden, dark, a room full of corners, ancient stones and old Roman glass, two Arabic drums, a flute, an African mask, odd leather-bound volumes; nobody except me could find anything there.

"It's like a museum. . . ." "How can you live in the dark?" People shrugged their shoulders; they didn't understand; they were irritated by the skull, but I smiled to myself.

It was my home. It gave me a chance of blaming my parents for not giving me one. In their house I slept in the spare room. This was my own room, mine alone.

But on that day I didn't enjoy the peace of my room. I looked for things to do. I read some poetry, which helped, but then I began to feel that everything was superfluous—the thoughts, the images, the plans. I went into the street, which was busy on Saturday night, called out to people I knew, had some coffee, and then sank into a seat at the movies, forgetting my problems as I watched a crudely dramatic murder case.

The next day I hitchhiked back to camp and formally reported. My first leave had ended.

There were three weeks to fill in before the cadet school began so I was sent to work in a hospital. I chose the psychiatry department mainly because all the other girls chose to work with children or soldiers. Besides, it sounded interesting.

"They" was the term applied to the people in my ward. Usually "they" were talked of in whispers, or with a smile. "They" were not dangerous, I was told, but slightly abnormal and in need of treatment.

It was not exactly a likable job. I woke with the dawn, put on a white uniform with a funny-looking cap, walked a mile from the square, ugly living quarters to the hospital. My hands frozen, a cigarette between my lips, its smoke mingling with the steam of morning dew rising to the first beams of the sun, I reported for work. From that moment I put on a professional smile, said good morning and had a good word for everyone.

"Nurse Ariel!—the pillow." "Nurse!—a glass of water, a tablet, a comforting story."

But it fascinated me, to be transferred to a completely strange world; from a world of objects to a world of images. Nothing was real and yet for the first time I felt that my days were full.

I didn't feel the need to go anywhere after work or to see anyone. It would have disturbed my sense of completeness.

In a psychiatric ward one has to become involved, to take part in dreams, to identify oneself with each of the patients, and to enter into his unreal, hovering world with values, reasons, and results utterly its own.

There was Ben, who had tried to kill himself and had been brought to the hospital half dead. He had drunk a bottle of kerosene and was stoically proud of the fact. He said, "I took it in my hand, like this—no, like that; then I thought, it smells terrible. Have you ever smelled kerosene? Then I said to myself, 'It's like medicine,' and I drank it all."

"What did it taste like?"

"Well, next time I'll take something else."

When you asked him why he did it, he laughed, and shrugged his shoulders.

He told a succession of obvious lies and then became very ill. One morning he said he had a secret to tell me because he liked me. He said his wife was dead, she had committed suicide after murdering their little daughter. He showed me a photograph of his daughter.

"Isn't she sweet, the poor little dead thing."

His eyes burned as he told me his secrets. Then he added, "It's a pity about my wife, she was a nice woman."

I joined him in his illusions, nodded as he spoke, expressed sorrow or sadness. For those few weeks Ariel did not exist. I had a hundred personalities, and it was a comfortable escape. Necessary, confusing at times and at times, perhaps, overdone.

There was Rose, who wanted a baby and couldn't have one. She called me and said, "I'm going to have a baby in an hour. We must find a name for him."

Then her pains would begin. They were real pains. She held her stomach in agony, and held my hand until I felt it would bleed. In the end she pulled a small pillow from under the sheets and showed it to everybody as her newborn baby, and

played with it close to her breasts and made me stroke the wrinkled cotton surface.

There was Noah, who imagined she had asthma. I never thought that I could, calmly and coldly, watch someone in obvious pain while telling myself that the pain was not real. But she did indeed feel the pain she pretended to and that was enough for me. I played the double part: Nurse Ariel watching calmly and feeding her tablets which had no physical effect, scientifically waiting for the illusion to pass, and the new Ariel who had developed in the hospital, not a nurse, but someone involved, sharing the illusory pain. My fist would tighten to the moans. Though they were illusory, they were there. I believe in God, and He is there. He allowed the pain so it was surely there, too. Nurse Ariel was saying, it will pass, it's nothing, but the other Ariel wanted to scream, couldn't breathe properly, felt a choking pain rising from inside, and very real relief when the attack was over.

It was as though I had been set in another world for a few weeks, where there was no thinking, since thought was of no value.

The day before the last went slowly. While making beds I thought of everything in the world. There was not much work and after listening to Ben's stories about why death's kingdom appealed to him, and what kerosene tasted like, and to the giggles of Rose, I was sent off to help another ward. On the telephone the nurse had said, "Is she a strong girl?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I suppose you want to wash Ruth."

They did.

Ruth told me, later, what a young and beautiful woman she was. She had a room to herself in the hospital and her mother was nursing her. When I went in, a heavy, sickening smell hit me, the smell of live flesh mixed with medicine. It was difficult to define, but it filled every corner of the room. A woman lay

on the bed wrapped in purple bandages, her eyes were shut but she was moaning. It was a slow, deep moan, and I felt the pain of it all through my own body.

A little nurse had come with me. She gave me a white apron, a mask for my mouth and nose, and I had to tie my hair inside all the coverings.

The upper part of Ruth's body had been burned so that no skin was left. I could see only what looked like meat hung in a butcher's shop, and suddenly I remembered an accident I had seen, when a little boy had been crushed by a car: he had looked like that. Later, I learned that Ruth had spilled paraffin oil over herself and set fire to it deliberately.

Her face had not been burned. The skin was olive, but her eyelashes had gone and her dark green eyes looked at me through the burned lids. She said nothing and took no notice when I kept repeating, "You'll soon be better. It will pass."

The little nurse gave me some sheets. Then we carried the woman to the bathroom. I returned to make the bed. None of the other untrained nurses would so much as enter the room. I took off the sheets which were covered with iodine, yellow with pieces of skin, and oily with vaseline. I put on the new, sterilized sheets, and then opened the window. Some fresh air blew in but not enough. The smell rose up whenever I touched any of the woman's belongings.

On the bedside table was a photograph of a young man. It had been torn in two and put together again with tape.

I went back to the bathroom. We filled the bath with warm water and then slowly, bandages and gauze and all, put Ruth in the bath. But though we didn't remove the grease, this was the only way to change the bandages which were stuck to the skin. We could only touch her head or the lower part of her body and I was afraid she might slip.

She said the water was too hot. These were the first words she had spoken since I arrived. Then, slowly, we took the bandages from her body after they had been loosened by the hot

water. We put on new masks and then the torturing of all three of us began again.

I took the edge of a bandage and tried to move it carefully. But it had stuck to the red flesh and the woman made a gesture of pain to stop me before I hurt her more. It seemed to take hours. She closed her eyes and left herself completely to our treatment. Then something peculiar happened. Suddenly I had no more feeling. She became a piece of meat that I had to separate from a newspaper wrapping—except for the smell that was everywhere.

The little nurse went out. I looked at the woman and watched her opening her eyes. She said, "Don't ever fall in love. He'll fool you."

She pronounced every syllable slowly as if wanting to say much more. Then, with a moan, she shut her eyes again.

When the little nurse came back the water in the bath was full of pieces of skin and clots of blood. Together we rebandaged the woman over a thick layer of vaseline. She asked us to scratch her back. I think she even smiled.

Her breasts were like round pieces of meat; you could see the veins and the blood pulsing through. It was a kind of red nightmare, which turned into a yellow one, and then became purple and white with the cloth. The mother stared at us, suffering.

We put the woman back into bed and she asked me to give her the man's photograph, which I did, and again she tore it into pieces, noting my understanding look. The mother patiently took up the pieces and put them together again and set the photograph aside.

That night I don't suppose I got more than a few minutes' sleep.

My last day in the hospital came. Behind our ward was a small room with a single bed, which was used for people who were dying. They came from the adjacent ward for patients

with internal diseases. A Persian had been put there and had been there for several days. He was old, big, and round-faced. For all the patients who were put into that room no hope was left, and he was left to live his last days, or hours, alone. The room had the heavy smell of hopelessness, of staleness, of wet sheets, of approaching death . . . But no one could comfort the Persian in his last hours because he had no relatives and none of the nurses could speak his language. His eyes asked for things, but nobody responded as he murmured quick sentences in a strange tongue. He was completely helpless. His body would pass away without his mind or spirit being able to communicate with anyone in these last moments.

I was feeding him when all at once I had an idea. His name was printed on a card hung from the bed. I got closer to him, avoiding the odor, and slowly pronounced his name. I said it again and again until I got it right; I pointed to him, again saying his name, and then to myself, pronouncing my own name slowly A-R-I-E-L; and again Ariel; and once more.

I took his hand in mine, pointed it towards him, and saw his lips shape his own name. Then I pointed his hand at myself and together we pronounced ARIEL. He had learned it, and was able to say it; a smile, a grin, appeared on his face like a child who has found a treasure of sweets, and he was completely happy as he kept repeating his name with all the strength left in his lungs. He went on calling for me, and each time was amazed again that I responded and came to him when he called me by name.

For the first time I felt that perhaps I had done a good thing, a truly good thing, and without much effort or thought. I was glad to have given someone a means of communicating with the world outside, and perhaps new hope.

By lunch time that day the Persian was dead.

The matron said casually, "Take the body out." Turning to me she said, "Will you wash the bed. We have another patient for this room."

"No!" I shouted, and ran out.

My white cap fell off as I ran. I reached the open fields, escaping from his quiet, childlike voice: A-R-I-E-L, A-R-I-E-L. The branches of the olive trees seemed to whisper in his voice, calling me; the wind, as it rose, repeated it. Even the drops of rain, when they began falling, seemed to fall to the rhythm of my name as he had called it. And his smell was in my nostrils, the odor of death. I was glad to let the rain wet me, but it couldn't wash away the smell. Even my apron, swaying to and fro, made the sound of my name and the sound of the wheels of the little wagon on which they had carried him away.

I lay down on my stomach, my hands pressed against my ears. The sun came out, and all about me looked washed and clean, except my apron, which had become covered with mud. But there was the smell of fresh earth and grass, and some birds flew by. There were red flowers in between the green grass.

I stared at the sheet of paper in front of me. The first lecture in the cadet school was over and I was left alone in the high-ceilinged room. The first morning had been easy: a routine greeting to the M.P. at the gate, easy chatter with the other girls as I tried to sort out the situation. Now it was time for decisions.

I drew a straight line down the middle of the paper: I must cut myself in two. For the next few months of the course I would have to plan my moves in detail, master every moment by predicting it, work out a part and play it artistically, making sure that I didn't fail or break down at any point. This was my only hope of coming through it well, of remaining in complete charge of myself and of all situations. I retraced the line down the center of the paper.

One half was the future Lieutenant Ariel. The easiest way for that person to get on well would be to play a new game, to be sociable, helpful, and always kind; to volunteer for things, never

to complain, to co-operate dumbly. It might be as well to make friends, but only on the surface; I would keep myself stainless, faultless, sociable, and strictly under control, holding back every desire to protest. Then I would be left to myself.

On the other side of the line drawn down the middle of the paper would be me, I myself, able to feel things more deeply and fundamentally, but sharing my emotions with no one and never exhibiting them. Within me I would be the mistress; outside, if necessary, a slave. I would knit my world together, make contact with the outside world, write the right kind of letters, and be as I thought appropriate to different people. On leave every other week-end I would be my other, my true self, as bad as I wished, doing unkind things, harming or hurting as I pleased, or blessing and making happy. For a few months I would trim my life to fit a schedule and stretch out nets to collect my joys and—if I wanted—my sorrows. I would cry or laugh if I had to, but never let myself be pushed around; I would get all I wanted whatever that might be.

But what *did* I want? My hand wrote *power* on the paper; but it was something more than that that I needed: the power to influence people, to pull the strings and make them dance to my rhythm. The power to let go of the string if I felt inclined and watch the puppets fold up. I had done that before but had selected weak puppets. This time I would attempt something harder and more challenging. I had done it before, but it had not been worth while. . . .

The girls were at lunch and I was still alone in the lecture room, remembering my experiments with a weak puppet.

"Why haven't you got any girl friends?" My father used to ask me, angrily, and I could never answer. I did have girl friends, but they were not the usual kind. I needed them as at my age one needs a toy to play with. Silly children I enjoyed impressing, directing, confusing, and later on even feeding. They had something in common. They were weak characters and I found them tedious after a time. I lied to them deliberately. They envied

and admired me at first and, without exception, hated me at the end of the friendship. I had always needed this kind of relationship, and had built up a moral theory about it. In every case the children had been a few years older than I. Then, as I grew older . . .

It was an apple tart I bribed her with first. I had noticed her the day before and had seen that she was pretty, stupid, and dependent enough to be a new protégée. Next day I met her in the street and offered her an apple tart.

She told me her life story. The poor girl's mother had died of cancer, her father had married again, and immediately his new wife had asked the fatal question, "The child or me?" The wretched man needed a wife, and moreover, she supported him financially, so he let the child slip. Not that she was really a child then; she was eighteen and had started earning her living. She seemed the right kind of girl for me. To her I could be mother, father, and confessor. She told me that her father and mother thought her a Lesbian.

We finished the apple tart, for which I insisted on paying. She said as we parted that she trusted me absolutely. The next day I bought her a ring, which she could never have afforded; and I began my Pygmalion experiment, pulling strings and enjoying it. A day or two later she appeared with a man. This was not part of my program, so I set out to remove him; it proved easy enough.

Rina had a pretty face on which was a disfiguring tuft of hair. Once she asked me to pull out the hairs one by one, which I did, giggling; afterwards I was sick. She had what she called dreamy eyes, but from the neck down she was much too fat for delicate tastes; even for those who love buxom women there was too much of her. At the same time she was often pleasant looking.

The man she appeared with on this particular day was, I

thought, too good for her, and I took care to see that he thought the same. It was easy. I smiled at him and spoke pertly, with Rina watching me admiringly. With only slight changes she would repeat every sentence I spoke. She even began to believe that some of my better ideas were her own, and that was too much for me and spoiled the doubtful pleasure I got from her company.

One day the young man came to me and said that he no longer liked Rina. He took me to supper and I made a point of insuring that she should see us together. He was worth an evening, but after that I saw no more of him and told Rina that I had dropped him. She was full of admiration. Moreover, now that she was really alone I could take complete control of her.

She was three years older than I. I told her she should keep as quiet as possible when in company, and whenever she began to talk I looked sharply at her. After a time she rid herself of some of her more shocking exclamations, and after every effort at expressing herself she looked to me for reassurance. I taught her to stare at people, lowering her head and raising her eyes. I made her remove the hair from her legs and induced her to start doing something to reduce her figure.

When she was ready to be exhibited I lost much of my interest. I took her to a town and to people who knew nothing about her. She played her part well enough and most of the talking was done by me; but it became tedious, and soon I picked someone more interesting to talk to and left her alone. On the way back I asked her how she had got on. I had left her alone and wanted to know what she had done without me. But she was silent for a few minutes and then said that perhaps she ought not to tell me intimate things. It was her first rebellion! I took her damp, fat hand, looked at her as gently as I could and told her that she should be ashamed of talking like that. She was ashamed, but to punish her I told her I would not take her out that evening.

Taking Rina out was very amusing. People were already won-

dering why I had taken up a girl of that kind, and I took pleasure in having her around when I knew she was not wanted. I introduced her to some close friends of mine and told them lies about her, which I made her try to justify. This made me feel really brave.

Once, when she was moving to new rooms she talked to everyone she met about its interior decorations. In fact, it hadn't any, but the more people she met through me the more "equal" she felt, and the greater her urge to show off in conversation.

But Rina was conscious of the fact that she was one of the so-called lower classes, and in that I found new amusement. I was able to give her a false picture of what upper-class life was like, and so make her feel that she was approaching that bliss. High society is, of course, mainly habit; so I began teaching her grotesque habits. I got her some horrible smelling incense sticks which are supposed to be burned in churches, and told her that upper-class English people used them in their houses when important guests were expected. She believed me and tried them out on a poor man who visited her in her rooms. Apparently he did not like them, so we decided that he must be very low class.

I taught her what kind of shoes to wear and what drinks to order. In this I really meant to help her. After all, it is useful for a girl to know how to hold a man's arm, or a cocktail; how to walk and how to sit down. At this task, surprisingly enough, I was steadfast and consistent, though it bored me.

After about two months she became the kind of girl in whom improvement could reasonably be expected. She used about ten face creams, walked about with a dictionary of calories. She had read *How To Make Friends*, learned to talk about Van Gogh, and made a habit of burning incense in her rooms. All I had to do now was to carry her superficial education a step farther, and see that she met some useful people. Then, perhaps, I would feel that my task was done and set about looking for a new toy.

I took her to the university several times. She told everyone

that she was a student, and quoted painfully learned sentences from Kant, Plato, the UN Charter, or from the most popular of the evening papers, not quite knowing the difference. But she had a good memory and believed in herself by now. I began to feel that I had accomplished something. I lent her money and never asked for it back. If I insulted her publicly she accepted the insult modestly. I could make her do anything, believe anything, talk or wear or swear to anything. I had complete power over her; I dominated her entirely, and I was bored to death.

I began looking for something new, saw her less and less, and then one night had a terrible nightmare. The scene was a sandy beach on a hot day. Rina was lying on her back, and sweating. The tuft of hair on her face seemed longer and darker than usual and her red skin was greasy; sand stuck to its wetness, seemed to flow and spread all around her. In the dream she was big, and hundreds of small men were climbing on her, disappearing into her flesh like ants, biting, licking, and kissing her. They, too, were sweaty, red, and sticky. They began playing with each other and all at once had long hair, like women, and long, exaggerated men's sex organs. The sun grew hotter and they played animatedly and screamed and laughed with joy. Then in my dream, I appeared. I was dressed in red and my face was pale. I was riding in the sky and giggling. As I laughed happily the men with Rina grew larger. They stood in a line beside her and she was crying. I began to ride away into the sky and waved good-by. My dress changed from red to gray. I stopped laughing and was sick. When I woke from the dream I had a terrible thirst and a headache, and decided then and there that I would see no more of Rina. I would look for something new. I was not yet seventeen and had plenty of time.

I realized that what I had been doing to Rina was cheap, trivial, and base. This was not what I wanted. The game I had

meant to play should have been profound, valuable, complete, and truly artistic: not mean or cheap.

Before starting something else I would have to be rid of Ariel Ron, the Colonel's daughter. People to whom I was the Colonel's daughter must be ignored or made to accept me as a person in my own right, and become involved with me because of what was me alone, not me plus my father.

I hated people saying "I'm so glad to meet you, Miss Ron. I've heard so much of your father."

"Ariel Ron! Your father is a wonderful man."

"Do you know Ariel Ron? You must have heard of Colonel Ron. She is in the army as well now, in her father's command."

All these simpering people were hoping, perhaps, to get to know my father through me. I imagined them saying, afterwards, "Colonel Ron? I know his daughter well."

"Tell me about your father," they said. "How do you get on with a national hero? What's it like to be your father's daughter?"

My superiors said, "You must set an example, you know, being the Colonel's daughter."

My cousin said, "Ariel, you really mustn't do a thing like that, with your father in his position. . . ."

But Ariel Ron was dead. If to become Ariel alone, complete as Ariel without the Ron, proved hard, I didn't mind. I don't envy the next person who treats me as Ariel Ron, I thought.

By now my hand had stopped drawing lines on the sheet of paper in front of me. I paused to ask myself where my family stood in this scheme of mine. How should I behave to them? Did I have any choice? My brother was outside my calculations. With him I could be myself. I could respond naturally to his affectionate gestures and shining eyes. But my parents? I waved the question away, it was too uncomfortable. I would see how things worked out.

The first test came sooner than I expected.

On Friday night my mother came to camp. Her square black car stopped opposite the dining room while we were having the usual Friday night get-together.

"Ariel," someone called, "it's your mother, I think."

I went out and sat next to her in the car. She seemed to find it difficult to speak so I said, "What is it, Mother?"

I could see she had been crying. I looked at her warm brown eyes and long dark blond hair, tied in a chignon. She was very slim and very small. I took her hand gently in mine: long delicate fingers, a wedding ring, and the palm of the hand showing signs of hard work.

It was strange that my own mother had no words to say; a wall had grown up between us, the stones of which had been put there, mostly by me, one by one, year after year. She seemed a stranger, without link or contact. And yet she had come to me; I could never have gone to her.

She collected her thoughts and said, "Nothing. I just felt like seeing you."

"Is that why you've been crying? And came all this way so late?"

"It's your father." She sat up and turned to me. "And please, Ariel, listen. Don't look at me blankly as he does. Just listen. There's nobody else to whom I can talk, so please be kind for a moment. I've even seen you crying when you were a baby. I know I'm not a good mother but it's not entirely my fault, please try to understand."

Her hand held mine tightly as she searched for words. My face, hidden in the darkness, didn't disclose my efforts to find my own. I said, "Talk, Mother. Go on, talk."

"I don't understand him," she said. "I thought perhaps you did. He's so strange and alone and wrapped up in his own interests; never a kind word, never a compliment. He looks at everything contemptuously and doesn't appreciate anything. I just can't take it any longer, Ariel. He's there and yet he isn't.

The house is full of him and yet feels empty. He seems to be above everything and I'm so alone."

She sobbed quietly, still holding my hand, trying to draw strength from me. I stared at her.

"Mother." And the word echoed in the distance and seemed to get lost. *Mother*. She looked so tired and worn, so small that I felt like taking her in my arms and putting her to bed, as I would my little brother. I smiled and said, "It'll be all right. Don't cry. You've lived with him for so many years."

"Not with him, with what I imagined him to be, with the man I wanted him to be. He seems so bored. And he loves you so much, Ariel, he told me so. I thought maybe you would understand—" She added disapprovingly, "You're so much like him."

I responded to this with an unseen smile of pleasure.

And I did understand her difficulties, but they were unchangeable. My father and I were afraid of emotion. We didn't know how to express our feelings and thought it a sign of weakness to show them.

I tried to explain. "You see, Mother, holding your hand is difficult for me—I'm a woman, so I overcome my reluctance to express my feelings by a millon small things that I've learned and practiced. I buy a flower, remember birthdays, buy small presents, think of the right words to say. But I'm just like Father really. It's because he doesn't need affection himself that he should never be expected to show it to others."

"But how am I to know whether he loves me or cares?"

It was a simple, innocent question that a girl of eighteen might have asked about her sweetheart. At that moment she looked girlish and I had to say something—something that would help her and be convincing.

"He doesn't make it clear when he feels deeply, or what it is that he feels. We both think of him as hard and indifferent because although he never says anything when he does feel affectionate or gentle, he makes it very clear when he doesn't."

We sat quietly for some time; then I got out of the car and my mother drove off. I wanted to shout after her to come back, I wanted to beg her to be strong, I wanted to say to her "I love you, Mother," and to mean it.

Instead, I kicked at a stone and began humming a tune. The tune meant nothing and I was saying to myself she needs me, she needs me. I walked towards the barracks, which looked big and black against the moonless sky. The dining room which I had left half an hour ago was empty. The other cadets were in an adjoining room singing Friday songs and listening to a performance of which I had written a large part. I went to the dormitory and took off my uniform. I lay on my back staring at the dark ceiling, long beams of timber from wall to wall, down to the floor and back to the ceiling again: frames through which we marched or on which we stood or lay down every day as wooden as they.

Mother was much stronger than we all thought her. I could not have borne her life: this lack of attention, this having to lose her own personality for a man. She must love him very much, but what did she get in return? I knew her so little; I had never really known her, and now the wall had grown too high, she on one side, I on the other. I was saddened by these thoughts.

One of my earliest childhood memories dates from when I was three years old and my father was in prison because of his underground activities against the British Mandatory authorities. My mother and I went to visit him in the prison. He was behind a kind of wire netting. There were many people there, all excited and some of them crying. I could just slip my hand through the mesh of the netting to my father, who took it and held it warmly. My fingers were the only ones that could pass. My mother could only weep. Perhaps this laid the foundation stone of the wall between us, for since then it had often been only my hand that could reach my father; sometimes without my knowing it I had reached him.

Growing up in town I drifted further away from my mother. She began doing social work and a maid was added to the household. My father was never at home so it was easy to blame my mother for neglecting me. In fact, it was I who moved away. I knew it hurt her when I made it obvious that I did not feel really at home. It hurt them both. They began to feel almost guilty at being so involved in public affairs.

Hurting them was just another way of gaining attention and dominating the situation. But there were occasions when I deeply felt my mother's absence. I was growing up and having the minor problems of adolescence, which I learned to keep to myself: there was the first menstruation; the first purchase of a brassiere. Mother was away when this sort of thing happened, and so small stones were cemented together to form bigger ones and the bigger ones were laid end to end to form a wall. Gradually it became impossible for me to talk to her about anything intimate or personal.

I realized that she was afraid of me, or afraid of the person I might become. I matured too quickly and had different standards; she was afraid of losing control of me and herself becoming dependent. Then, too, there was jealousy. It was as if she envied my youth, which drew attention to her lengthening years. My father liked to be seen with me, to see people turn their heads in our direction and murmur, "Who's the good-looking woman with the Colonel?" Mother feared the word "woman" if it was applied to me. She didn't want to share my father's affection with me. My friends were roughly the same age as hers, and when we went out together I deliberately made myself the center of attraction. She had no defense against this and, moreover, she was weakened by her love for me.

Now she had sought me out, come to me, and gone again.

The frame of rafters above my head grew blurred in outline. I felt as if I was looking into a vacuum, and the bed was float-

ing. Drowsily I heard the voices of the girls coming back from their sing. A friend, Tamar, came to my bedside and took my hand, but I jerked it away.

"Anything wrong, Ariel?"

"No, nothing. Did you have a nice time?"

"Yes. But Ariel, you look upset. Did I wake you up?"

"No, just strange thoughts. Good night, Tamar."

At that moment the Lieutenant's voice called, "Lights out!" and I was comforted by the darkness. I thought about Tamar. She was tall, her face was not pretty, but pleasant, and she was the kind of person you grew to like, and after many years realize that you don't really know at all. Tamar's family lived in a village where they had a large farm and were doing well. To me she was a combination of common sense and simplicity; she was always there, never pushing herself towards me, but appearing at the right times.

She lay awake, but we didn't talk; we exchanged looks through the semi-darkness, nodded, and pulled the blankets over our heads.

The routine of the course went on, and I was as popular and obedient as I had planned to be. Anyone needing help came to me. I was amusing, light-hearted, and had opinions on everything. I even behaved girlishly, sat and talked about dresses and boy friends by the hour, and brought out my collection of photographs for everyone to see. Whenever there was anything serious to discuss with the school commander I was chosen to represent the cadets.

The Commander sent for me one day.

"You've changed, Ariel."

"D'you really think so?"

"I remember you as a recruit. Now you are your real self. I knew that once you realized you could be popular you would come out of your shell."

"That's not true. I can act any part I choose to."

"You prefer to think it's your choice, whereas in fact you like what you are doing. You've never tried it before because you were afraid of failure. You're the kind that failure can easily break. You won't jump unless you are sure to fall on your feet."

"Is it success to be popular with a hundred future officers?" I asked ironically.

"Have it your own way, as long as you go on behaving as you are. I don't mind, but remember our deal."

I saluted and went out. She didn't understand and I intended to prove her wrong. On my next leave I'd be my real self again, completely. I itched impatiently at the thought of being back in the game, of putting my emotions, deeds, and feelings into the field as soldiers and marching them to victory. But there were still ten days to go to my next leave.

Then came a day when I had not the strength to act my part. We were sitting in a lecture room round a big table. The lecturer was giving us work for the next few hours. He was telling us what to do, as officers, if a soldier died or was killed in a unit commanded by any of us. We had to:

a. Write a letter to the parents;
b. Make an inventory of the soldier's belongings;
c. See that the funeral was carried out according to regulations in book (*c*) page 15.

"Now," said the lecturer, "you are all to assume that a soldier has died in your unit. You are to do (*a*)—that is, write a letter to the parents; and (*b*)—make an inventory of the soldier's belongings. You will hand in your papers in two hours."

At first I didn't grasp the idea fully. When I did, I meant, as usual, to start at once and before anyone else, and so have some free time. I took the inventory page and started filling it in: a watch, identity disks, a pack of cigarettes, matches, a wallet, photographs of parents and of a girl. I paused and frowned.

Ariel, what *are* you doing? It's a dead body, dead! It's a cold wrist the watch is on, a stiff hip on which the wallet rests. And can't you see the blood on the handkerchief?

Ariel, how can you? You have just turned a dead body over, dead! My head felt heavy. I bent towards the table, then got up, excused myself for a few moments, and went to lie on the bed. . . .

I remembered a little bird we found in the village, so cold and stiff . . . I brought it to Mother and said, "Mother, the bird is so cold."

"Yes, Ariel, that's because it's dead."

"What's dead?"

My father led me aside, took the bird from me and said, "Dead means very, very ill. The bird can't sing or fly any more."

"Like Grandpa when he was ill?"

"Yes, like Grandpa."

"Then he is dead, too?"

"No, he got better. But the bird will be dead forever."

I didn't understand but I left it at that.

Then my uncle was killed. My mother and grandmother wept for days. They brought a watch home—all that was left of him. And said that he was dead.

"Like the bird, Father?"

"Yes, Ariel, like the bird. He won't hold you high up in his arms any more. Nor joke."

"Is he cold, like the bird?"

Growing up I learned more and more—of death as well as of life. But again this was like the bird and again I couldn't understand. I felt dumb, silly, and without feeling as I returned to the table to complete the inventory of the dead soldier's belongings. An unused, half-atrophied cell in my brain had started working; all the rest were numb. My fingers, as they moved over the paper, were unrelated to my mind. I completed the inventory and put it aside like any of the other six exercises we did

every day. The letter to the dead soldier's parents was next.

I looked around. Some of the girls were working at it seriously as if solving a mathematical problem. Some were giggling stupidly, comparing notes, and laughing about it.

"Dear Parents,

"It is with deep regret that I have to notify you that your son X was killed while performing his duties.

"He was an excellent soldier, loved by all, and we were proud of him. If it is any consolation let me assure you that he lived and died . . ."

My hand clutched the chair. All at once I could feel the other cells of my brain awakening . . . I saw a little house in a village, the postman handing this letter to a mother . . . I heard her scream and I heard a little sister asking, "Mother, what is dead?" I saw another house, in town this time; the postman climbing the stairs, many stairs; coming to a door and pushing the letter under it . . . tremblingly, the father reads it . . .

Perhaps I was going to die; someone would write, "Dear Parents . . ." And Gal would get the letter with my personal belongings, a wallet, a watch, photographs of the family, a disk with the number 361950. Or my son might die and some lieutenant write me a letter.

I began laughing hysterically, loud uncontrollable laughter.

"Ariel, please shut up, we're working."

Working. I was dead.

"Please stop it!"

I could not. I laughed wildly. It was all so unreal, so funny.

I left the room quickly, taking the papers with me; ran out, stepping over dead birds and bodies, all with watches and wallets; ran and ran, saying, "Sorry to notify you . . ." "Disks, photographs, blood." "Dear parents . . ."

I laughed and cried at the same time, and began to feel very sick.

Next time it was my father who came to see me. He was shy about it and after a few minutes looked as if he regretted the impulse.

"I want to talk to you."

"So I gather. What have I done wrong this time?"

"Not you. It seems that I'm at fault. You must talk to your mother. She cries a lot and is not herself anymore. I can't change. You must be kind to her and try to explain."

"But I did."

He was surprised when I told him that Mother had been to see me.

"I can't be a substitute for you, Father. It's your problem."

I enjoyed saying that to him. He looked at me intently, and for a moment looked almost human.

"Perhaps she thinks there's another woman," he said. "That's why I've come to you. Because there isn't. It's only that I must feel free. I can't have my movements watched. I work hard and being alone is a relief from tension. She'll never understand that I can't relax in company, in small talk, or in behaving like a good husband or father, which I'm not. But you understand, or I think you do."

"Yes, I believe I do. I'll talk to her again."

"You can help me a lot, Ariel. You are my kind of person, and yet you are a woman. You could be a bond between me and your mother."

It was obvious that he had nothing more to say, but he didn't know how to end the conversation.

He was my father, wide-shouldered, with straight, handsome features and dark hair beginning to turn gray. He was also a lonely man, a man who did not believe in friends, who trusted nobody, a man who was stubborn and as hard as steel; but very, very lonely.

For the first time in my life I was not afraid of him, but I did feel a kind of sorrow. He could not express his emotions, but

must have felt some underneath. He couldn't put on an act and so make himself feel less guilty. He said, "If you need anything, Ariel, advice, a kind word, or anything at all, I want you to remember that you will never find a more suitable person to get it from than me."

He picked up his hat, put on his coat, called a brief Shalom as he got into his car, and drove away.

Why had he come? Was anything really the matter? Or had it been simply a need that occurs even to the strongest of us—the need to talk to someone? I knew that he had no one but me, and that he would never have admitted that he felt the need to be understood. He would have called it logic: it was the "logical" thing to do.

Later I found out how unpleasant it was to be the bond between my father and my mother. Mostly it was routine, but now and then it took special efforts and was painful.

I went outside early one morning, having found an excuse not to go to morning drill. I was sitting on a bench, my hands were freezing, and the latrine nearby filled the air with unpleasant smells. The sky was pale blue and it was my eighteenth birthday.

I tried not to be sentimental about it. But my eighteenth was an important birthday for me. It represented my official transfer to womanhood. I had celebrated it at six o'clock that morning, politely saying thank you to my gun for the good wishes conveyed to me by the feel of the metal when I awoke; for the good wishes and kind regards of the wooden ceiling; for the flowers outside, handed to me while I was still half asleep—to Ariel with love from Nature.

I was no longer a precocious sixteen or seventeen, but a woman in some decisive way: independent, free, and able to do or not to do.

It was my eighteenth birthday and I knew that my mother would have to remind my father of the fact. He would say something like, "Eighteen is she? Quite grown up."

Mother had promised to come and see me and her arrival, of course, was the event of the day.

Should I share my cake? Or take secret pleasure, every day, from cutting myself a slice, and spend today without anyone knowing it was my birthday. It was my day, under the showers, in the canteen, while training, or during the lectures; I would be eighteen on my own. Here, on the bench next to the latrine, the birds were singing—for me, of course; there was a breeze in the air, warming up to tell of spring at the door . . . I began recalling my seventeenth birthday . . . I had celebrated it in Jerusalem.

The day after my seventeenth birthday the town was still wrapped in a hot mist. I cut the stalks of the flowers sent me by Mike in half, because otherwise they would die more quickly. There were seventeen roses, and while cutting each one I realized that seventeen is quite a large number of years.

I threw the remains of last night's party into a basket. The empty bottles would have to be returned to the grocer. Two glasses and one small plate had been broken and the bits had to be cleared up—very nice glasses and plate.

"Party?" I said to myself.

It had started, I think, when Rina suggested that we give a birthday party together. I found myself sending out invitations for a certain date at nine in the evening, to about fifteen people. Never was a list of people drawn up with such lack of taste or tact. It was a group in which every three guests might find some common interest, but in which none of the triangles could have anything in common with the other. It looked to me as if it might be a kind of exciting game.

When the time came, everything was ready—drinks, food, and special cakes sent by my mother's cook. The radio would not be co-operative, of course. There was not a reasonable pro-

gram on any station. Although I had stage-managed the party to amuse myself, I didn't like it.

I worked it all out in my mind. Larry, who everybody calls "a very nice man," was asked so that I should have someone small to pity—someone small in size. He is odd looking, I thought, and pictured him losing his way in the fleshy wastes of Rina. Then there was Gad, whom I had once loved; now I remember his flattering looks and white, damp, slightly hairy hands. Gad would find himself a girl at the beginning and then, after a while, look for me. Mike would be late and would look for me as well. He still loves me, I thought, as I wrote the invitation. We had seen little of each other lately because of "incompatibility"—to use his word. I could have married him, I think, but he was too good for me.

There was Mel, the complicated musician, and his boy friend. They would come in separately so as not to arouse suspicion, but would exchange desirous looks every now and then. Naomi, my roommate, would sit in a corner cursing all seventeen-year-old-girls who celebrate their birthdays. The other guests were unimportant.

All at once I remembered my brother breeding white mice in a cage, letting them run around, watching their fights and their love affairs. He was always beside the cage, but I intended to move away from it.

Spring hung heavily in the air: spring that pushes people to venturesome freedom, to searching for something new. A sense of lightness that forces you to run, to hug, to kiss, to love, to get excited, or to get drunk. When Gad arrived early, before anyone else, I took him out to supper. I looked at the stained slacks on the bench; a year ago I had been dressed differently. As we walked along the street he tried to explain how spring made him turn towards me. But I began to feel unwell and meanly told him that his hands were damp. We returned to the house and found Larry in the room, so good-hearted as to be pitiable. Larry and Gad talked solemnly together, but Larry did not ap-

preciate the originality of Gad's remarks. I tried to be happy and warm.

Larry asked for tea, and Gad wanted a banana. Gad was cold and Larry was warm. Naomi arrived and began reading a book. There was a pleasant concert coming from the radio; all very charming and cozy so far, but what next? I felt the stage should be more crowded and decided to run and fetch Mel and his friend. Mel was really in love with the boy. I ran along the street, the sandals slipping from my feet, my white silk shirt rustling; the air was hot, hot, hot. I wanted to run, I wanted to love with all my strength, to feel a deep, unusual love.

The last house in the street was the one Mel lived in: stairs, a locked door, and darkness. If they are in, I thought, they surely will not open the door, and if they are out, where can they be? I scribbled a note and fixed it to the door, then ran downstairs into the street. The air was suffocatingly heavy, and darkness had fallen. The whole town seemed to be in a kind of dark mist. I bumped into a wall but went on running. All the lights were out: perhaps the electricity had failed. Only the long, shimmering headlights of cars lit the sides and corners of buildings. I was going to hate war if it were as dark as this in the streets. For a moment I was afraid, and felt myself sweating. My dress flew about in magnificent swaths as I ran, and the hot wind awoke deep, horrible desires in me. I frightened myself.

When I got to my room the lights were on. The stage was fuller now. Barry had arrived, and Rina, whom I needed as one needs a dog to teach tricks to. She was stretched out horizontally near Gad.

"She's beautiful," said Gad. "Why didn't you tell me she was so wonderful?"

Good enough, I thought, and went into the kitchen. A minute later Rina came in to ask what "sophisticated" meant. Gad had told her she was sophisticated, and added, "One day you'll be a remarkable person."

It made me feel physically sick. I wanted a drink but felt

I couldn't drink with these third-rate people. I began wishing that Mel or Mike would arrive. At least they didn't smell. They were really clean although Mike's breath had a peculiar smell because he smoked a pipe too much.

It was hot. Gad put on Rina's jacket, trying to be friendly. Larry tried to heat some wine but it didn't work, and the guests took to brandy. Bella started the only conversation of the evening that I can still remember.

"Whose radio is that?"

"Mine."

"Where did you get it?"

"In America."

Then, after a few minutes' silence, "How lucky you were to find this room."

"Wasn't I!"

I mocked, Bella mocked, Rina was mocking Naomi for not mocking the others. Naomi and I passed the food around. They'd better eat, I thought. What happened afterwards was unimportant. I wanted to be outside, where the air called to me. Then things began happening quickly. The door opened and Mike came in. I was relieved, because I liked him very much. Perhaps we could sit alone in the kitchen holding hands; he could rest his knee against mine if he wanted to. I wouldn't mind. I had never stopped loving him completely.

We went into the kitchen but Gad followed, looking very miserable. Then the door opened to let in the Golden family and some other guests, several of them uninvited. By now there were too many people in the room. Then Roni came and I looked at him and remembered the secret we shared. Mel and his lover followed and the party was now complete. But there was nothing on the radio, the food was almost finished, and the bottles were half empty. What next?

Unfortunately, I lost interest. Let them bother and fuss if they wanted to. I took some money, went outside, and started running. What happened then? I know I took a cab and asked

the driver to take me as near to the railway station as he could for the money I had with me. When the cab stopped I got out, made for the station, and began running along the railway line.

I arrived at a house and rang the bell. It was a small, pleasant house and through the door I could hear David's voice and the voice of a woman. I ran down the steps and back to the main road, but after a few seconds I turned and approached the house again. I thought to myself I shall ring, go in, and simply ask for a lift home. I rang. A cat came by. Then hall lights went on and through the frame of the glass door I could see David's blue eyes and blond hair and the face of a woman crowned with curlers and smeared with face cream. She looked too old to be his wife, and anyway I knew his wife was abroad.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Me," I said, adding that I wanted a lift home.

"Wait a moment," he replied.

I waited near his car. Then he came out and we drove away. The next two hours I shall never forget. They were the real celebration of my birthday. I was really happy, and I felt love—a difficult love. I knew he had a family, I knew there was no hope of continuity; but here was a man who loved me so much that he was afraid of himself and of his love, who wanted to stop seeing me, to forget me, but who always came back.

I said we must walk as it was spring, and we did, close to each other so that I could feel him through my thin blouse and skirt. He shivered a little and got excited and told me how he had got drunk at a bar the day before trying to forget me.

In our imaginations we built ourselves a small boat and sailed in it, trailing the golden path the moon leaves in the water. During the daytime we lay about and got sunburned, and kept going with the sun and drinking wine and making love under the blue, hot skies—not, as once we had, in a shabby room, fearing intruders.

I felt a tear on my cheek and I think one hung on his cheek, too. But it was spring. We wanted to be happy, and like chil-

dren we played. He lifted me and carried me along in his arms. We kissed as if we had not seen each other for years—warm, long, deep, kisses, leaving a smile on our lips.

Eventually we went back to his white car and I sat beside him, my skirt spread round me in black waves. He told me how beautiful I was and how beloved. Until death us do part he said, and added this was not a melodramatic sentence, but that it was really so. There were things that, once they were gone, left nothing very much to live for. I wanted to hug him with the whole of my body and heart and to breathe together with him in the dark, gray *Khamseen* skies. I felt drunk, but had had nothing at all to drink.

David said how warm and smooth my skin was, and his hands repeated it. I loved the delicacy of his moving hands—wide, brown ones—and I loved his wide chest, on which I felt secure; I loved the look in his blue eyes.

Nothing else happened. Later, I wondered why. We only kissed, hugged, and laughed with happiness. That was all.

We went back to my house. Through the window I could see that all lights were on. The crowd was singing folksongs. David and I thanked each other and said good-by. I felt relaxed now. I could walk slowly for hours. The spring air had a more gentle influence on me now.

I went into my room. Mike and Gad had gone. Most of the people who had made me run out had disappeared. A few couples were sprawled about, singing quietly. I accompanied their singing on my big drum. The room was untidy and there was one new couple who was unknown to me, but they were interested only in themselves and in the bottles beside them.

Rina seemed a little drunk. Mel sat close to his friend, and I joined him. The problem now was how to finish it all. One suggestion was that we should go out and sing in the street. The new couple said they were happy where they were and would await our return.

Naomi, my roommate, took her friend to his impatient wife.

Before going he said he hoped I would have less of a crowd on my eighteenth birthday. The rest of us started walking along the main road, followed by the noise of Larry's motorcycle, on which Rina was riding pillion. Gradually, bits of the group broke away, and when I turned towards home there were only three of us—Mel, his friend, and myself—a curious triangle, delicate and uncomfortable. When we got back the unknown couple was still there. The three of us cleared away the mountain of dishes and put some order into the room. I asked Mel to hint to the others that as it was already two in the morning they had better go and get some sleep somewhere else. The hint worked, and the unknown couple got up and left, helping each other through the door and saying as they went that, alas, it had been a dull party. Then they said good night and left. I took off my clothes, opened the door so the wind could blow in, and got into bed.

I felt very much alone and had a terrible headache, as though I had been drinking bad alcohol. And it was hot, hot enough to die. Presently Naomi came in and as she got into bed we exchanged brief opinions about my guests. I felt better in the darkness and soon, in spite of my headache, fell asleep.

I was awakened next morning by a loud knock on the door. It was David. Naomi had left and I was alone in the room, half asleep. He had brought a box with a birthday present in it, which he left on the table. Then he went out quietly.

I lay half awake, half asleep, and about noon got up and started cutting the rose stems. There were flowers all over the room, too many I suppose. Outside there was still the heavy warmth of the *Khamseen.*

Now I was eighteen.

"Ariel! Come and have breakfast. What's the matter?"

It was Tamar. I woke as if from a dream, to find myself seated on the bench next to the latrine.

"Nothing," I called back, "just thinking."

"You're always thinking. What about food? Coming?"

"Yes, I'm coming."

I got up unwillingly. They didn't know. They didn't know it was my birthday.

My next leave produced a new situation. Opposite my house lived a quiet, pleasant family, called the Conants. Their sons had been away but were due back on vacation, and I was asked to drop in on Friday night to meet them. The invitation had been sent to the camp ten days before I got my leave.

I had seen photographs of the two boys. The older, Ned, was supposed to be very intelligent, rather gentle, and about thirty years old; the younger was twenty-five, and looked extremely handsome and strong, and was doing research work of some kind.

Friday came and before dressing for the evening I rested in my room for an hour, letting my hair dry and, curiously amused, trying to predict what would happen. Something had to happen. Nothing had happened for so long that if something didn't happen of its own accord I would have to make it happen.

I dressed in a striking dark green frock, with a high neck, the stuff clinging smoothly to my body; combed and put up my hair, leaving one curl over my forehead; put on dark brown shoes, a thin gold necklace, and no make-up. I never had used make-up. I smiled with satisfaction when I glanced at myself in the mirror. The woman looking back at me was the woman I wanted to be, and none the worse for the natural twinkle in her eye and the slight curl to her upper lip.

I crossed the street and was welcomed warmly by Mr. Conant. He and his wife were not Israelis, but had lived in the country for many years. Mrs. Conant came forward, smiling, and I was soon at ease. She introduced me to Ned, who shook hands shyly, holding my hand in long, white, gentle fingers. We sat

down and the conversation started slowly. Ned's work was in economics, and we talked of that mainly. He was a brilliant talker, clear and amusing, and never said a superfluous sentence. I listened, fascinated. His steady hazel eyes, short, dark-blond hair, and rather clumsy body were all erased from my vision. I saw only the delicate lips, moving with confidence and talking sense. His father was too proud of what Ned said to listen very carefully, and every now and then winked happily at me, realizing that I had been completely captivated.

Then the door opened and a couple came in. The young man, as I had guessed from the photograph, was indeed handsome; not as tall as his brother but with a perfect figure, gray eyes, and darker hair than Ned. I guessed that he was the kind of man who chose his ties with great care and gave himself an approving glance in the mirror—like I do, I thought to myself, and smiled.

"Ariel, this is Bill."

A strong hand held mine, completely covering it. With the other hand he drew towards me the girl who had come in with him.

"This is Lily, a friend of mine," he said.

Lily was the shy, quiet kind. She was a year or two older than I, with a good face, a tolerable figure, and easy manners; a comfortable person to have around. She and Bill sat on the sofa, and the conversation which had so fascinated me had to be changed.

From the moment of Bill's arrival, Ned had eyes only for him. He looked at his brother with something of the adoration of a mother. He got up and said he would change before dinner.

Then Mrs. Conant came in, shook my hand, and kissed me. I really liked this woman, whom age did not bother in the slightest. She was small and had a washed, pure look about her. I found it difficult to think of her as the mother of these two men.

I caught Bill looking at me. It was an extraordinarily confident look, not unappreciative but as though he was saying, "I

know you, my girl." He had a devilish twinkle at the corners of his eyes, which seemed to be repeated at the edges of his mouth. It was a look that made me feel naked. I had to turn away quickly and make some trivial remark. After that he paid hardly any attention to me, now and then dropping a word, or a smile, or an answer to a question, but all in a casual way, with nothing directed at me, personally.

Ned came down and we went into dinner. I sat next to him, and soon we were talking in a friendly, natural way as if we had known each other for a long time. It was obvious to me that he had liked me from the first moment of our meeting, but it seemed to be a liking for something he would not dream of trying to take for himself. It was admiration, frankly, even softly, shown; and I felt a trifle disconcerted by my own feeling of tenderness. It is so much easier to deal with harsh, crude men, the kind I knew and had chosen as friends.

I behaved with quiet modesty. This was not the place for sharp witticisms. Ned asked for nothing, and his look suggested no desires. He was easy to get on with but at the same time a challenge. I almost feared the frankness and honesty of his hazel eyes and for once felt no pride in my own green and venturesome eyes.

It was a short evening. We sat for an hour or so after dinner talking lightly. When I was ready to leave I shook hands with my host and hostess and came to Bill. His hand, holding mine, was dry and strong and somehow exciting. I found myself avoiding his eyes.

"Glad to have met you, Ariel. Hope I shall see more of you," he said, still holding my hand.

"Stop it, Bill," said Ned, jokingly, "don't make passes at my friend." His smile as he spoke denied the suggestion of his words.

"He's not doing anything of the kind," said Lily. The tone of her voice made us all turn to look at her. She had hardly spoken the whole evening, but now her voice sounded hard and

domineering and her face looked two-dimensional, without expression. There was some laughter, and then Ned said, in the most natural way, "Come, Ariel, I'll take you home."

We took our coats and went out. I held his arm. We talked about the army and he listened so intently to what I was saying that I felt it necessary to choose my words with care and make sure that I said nothing silly or irrelevant. When we got to my house he held my hand and said, "Shall we go for a walk tomorrow morning? After all, you're going back the day after."

"Of course. Call for me about ten o'clock."

As he said Shalom he added, "I like you, Ariel, and want to get to know you better."

Then he put his hands in his pockets and walked away.

I opened the front door, kicked off my shoes, lit a cigarette, and made myself a cup of coffee. It had been a strange, full evening and yet it was still early, only ten minutes to eleven. I was puzzled, amused, and a trifle angry with myself. I had liked both the boys, but now, somehow, I was afraid of my liking. I knew that I could get Ned if I wanted to, that he would take me at my face value and feel that something exclusive was growing up between us. I decided that Bill would be jealous. For him I would have to work out a different technique, which would convince him that I was not unresponsive to his admiration.

I changed into my nightgown and slipped into bed, still feeling the warmth of Bill's hand in mine, still reacting to the magnetism of Ned's voice.

Happy dreams, Ariel, and lots of luck!

Promptly at ten o'clock next morning Ned appeared, looking well in his corduroy slacks and white sweater. His face was bright and I suddenly noticed that his eyes, too, inclined to green. We walked through the town. Jerusalem, on a Saturday

morning, is like a baby in its cradle; only the birds and echoing footsteps disturb its tranquility.

There was a light mist over the town, and it looked clean and shut, completely at rest, the many church bells counting the hours and giving the only indication of passing time.

We went along the slope of a hill to a western valley, the Valley of the Cross, with a medieval Greek monastery rising from its bed, among olive and fig trees. He held my hand as we walked, but held it with conscious gentleness as if afraid of hurting it. He said, "I suppose you think it silly to like someone in such a short time?"

"Of course I don't. But do you like me that much?"

His smile gave the answer.

"Do you like me, just a bit?"

"If I didn't, would I be here?"

"Anyway, I like to think you do. You know, Ariel, we could be very good friends."

We talked, lightly, tenderly, never going very deep, and walked back again through the town. I tried to make him feel completely at ease, to drag him into my scheme without his being aware of it, to break through his innocent smile to whatever might be behind it.

"You do like me, Ariel?"

"I do. You are so good. You understand things, and you make me feel secure."

Words, words, like a record. I felt guilty for a moment. We say these things, repeat them until they feel like worn-out clothes we hate to wear, yet all clothes are, when it comes to it, made of materials and buttons and threads. If only I could be less conscious of the fact that words always sound the same!

We walked and walked. I wanted apples and got them. I wanted flowers and got them. It was after one o'clock when I reached home.

"Will you come over tonight?" he asked.

"Who will be there?"

"Same as last night, my parents, Bill, Lily probably. You do like my brother, don't you? He's strange, but he's wonderful and handsome, don't you think?"

"Yes, he is, and I do like him."

"Good, then you'll come tonight?"

"Yes, Ned."

That night, too, delighted me. Everything went well, and the conversation was bright, with Ned at the center of it. He had clear-cut opinions and knew how to express them. Bill also talked well but less fervently, and seemed uninterested in me. He hardly looked at me, and I wondered if he was really bored or if it was a game he was playing. Lily was there as an ornament. It was obvious that she loved Bill; apparently she thought it worth her while just to sit with the rest of us so as to be taken home by him.

There was a phonograph and Mr. Conant put on some dance records. He danced with Lily and Ned with his mother when the first record was played.

"Presumably I'm supposed to dance with you," said Bill, smiling.

"Would you prefer not to?"

"That would look odd. Do you dance well?"

We danced. He held me firmly but not too close, and as we danced he said, "You're pretty smart, aren't you?"

"That sounds as if you don't like me, Bill."

"I like my brother a lot."

"What has that go to do with it?"

"Nothing, perhaps, but when your little head starts planning, take it into account."

We were dancing a slow tango. He danced well. Everyone else was watching us closely. Ned waved from the other side of the room and his mother smiled at us.

"You didn't really answer me, Bill," I said. "Did what you said just now mean that you don't like me?"

"You know very well I do. You usually get what you want, Ariel, don't you?"

I looked up at him. His gray eyes were stripping me naked again. I didn't answer his question, but drew closer to him. The rhythm quickened for a moment and then the record came to an end.

"Another dance?" I asked.

He looked about. The others were not going back to their seats.

"We might as well," he said, and as we began dancing again he made remarks about my figure and my skin, but in a casual way that left me rather at a loss.

"You dance well," I said.

"I know that."

"And I know that I have a good figure and nice skin."

He laughed.

Then, with great effort, and producing each word with difficulty, I said, "I'd like to talk to you sometime, Bill." I expected him to say no, or just laugh.

"I thought you would," he replied, "and perhaps you will. Perhaps afterwards you'll wish you hadn't. You see, Ariel, I know you."

"I'm glad you do. I'm looking forward to our talk."

"But a little warning to begin with. Don't hurt my brother. Then we can be friends."

It was time for me to go and the next morning I had to return to camp. I would get another two or three days' leave when the cadet course finished in about two weeks' time.

"We shall be at the seaside, then," Mr. Conant said. "We've a small cottage there. Why don't you join us for your few days' leave? The boys would love it and so would we."

I said I would like to very much and would write to them from camp saying when they could expect me. As I said so I glanced at Bill, trying to say with my eyes: You're not through with me yet!

Then I let Ned take me home. He wanted to come in, so I took him to my room and he watched me packing and pressing the army skirt I had to wear next day. He said very little, merely sat in an armchair looking tired. Then he called to me, "Come here, Ariel."

I sat on the arm of his chair.

"You're very beautiful and I think I'm going to love you very much."

I let him hold me and kiss me. Now his hands were not the ones that had held me gently during our morning walk. I liked his kisses. They, too, had an unexpected quality. After a few minutes I withdrew from him, went aside, and changed into my nightgown and got into bed.

"Now kiss me good night, Ned, and as you go out please switch the light off. The switch is at the side of the door."

He approached the bed.

"Can't I stay?"

"No, Ned, please, it's too late, and I'm tired, and tomorrow I have to start early in the morning. I'll see you on my next leave. Write to me, Ned."

"Ariel! Oh, never mind." He turned. His voice had lost its softness and become harsh.

"But you will write to me, Ned? I've had a wonderful time."

"Yes, I suppose I will. Shalom. Sleep well."

It was raining when I set off for camp next morning. It cleared up later but my uniform felt cold and damp, and the flat shoes felt uncomfortable after the high heels of my leave. The camp was exactly as it had been and would be, but somehow I felt sustained by a sense of accomplishment.

At lunch time next day I talked to Tamar. She was nearer to being a friend of mine than anyone else in camp. I told her about Ned and Bill.

"You like men, don't you, Ariel?"

"I suppose I do. It never lasts long, though, and I'm never really attracted to them physically except, maybe, out of curiosity. Maybe it's all just curiosity, or trying to prove to myself that I really know how they tick."

"Do you really know? After all, they're not all the same."

"No, but it's fun watching how they behave, and seeing if they react as I plan. They're very much like women, you know, Tamar, and also have an urge to find things out. They respond to flattery even more than women do. You can interest a man at once by saying something like, 'I've heard a lot about you.' He's sure to want to know what it is that you've heard. If you tell a man you like his tie, or that he has good hands, or that you were much impressed by a remark he made recently, he'll be charmed. With a few comments like that you'll have him taking enormous pains to get you to say more. By that time, if he wants you to say yes to something and you say no, he'll go as far as you want him to just in order to prove that you really meant yes."

"But what if you really meant no?"

"Then the game isn't worth the candle. Besides, when you really mean no, it's possible to say it so clearly that no one in his senses could misunderstand."

Tamar's smile suggested that she was not wholly convinced. She had a boy friend in her village, a charming boy her age, far from sophisticated, but charming.

I was somehow jealous. She wasn't bored with him, while I continued looking for something I couldn't define; dancing with a man, eyes roaming the room for more interesting people, never myself, never letting up, like a child wanting a banana and, when getting it, screaming out "No, I want an orange," as if the world's purpose was to obey his changing moods.

"Men are attracted to you, Ariel," she said. "I mean, all men. Is it unconscious, or do you make a point of being attractive to every man you meet?"

"It's unconscious *and* deliberate. After all, it's a part of a

woman's nature to know how to play the game—the right smile, the helplessness at the right time, the calculated giving and receiving. Some men, of course, are difficult. I'm always a bit afraid when I find myself attracted by a good and kindly man. He gets hurt easily and the affair ends nowhere. It has consequences, too, and I hate emotional consequences, letters telling me how much better I am than the writer, or how cruel I am. It's so unnecessary. I like to be on a basis of absolute equality with my men friends."

"Have you ever been in love, Ariel?"

Luckily, a whistle called us back to the lecture room. I was glad, now, to hurry back into that big, dreary hall. The question Tamar had asked me was one that I could not and would not answer. I would have answered if I had known how, but I didn't.

Had I ever been in love? Would I ever be in love?

The last few days went quickly and were full of action. It was the beginning of spring. Even the barracks, warmed by the sun and with green grass around the edges, looked and felt different. Discipline had become loose and most of us already felt ourselves to be officers in all but name. We spent these last few days preparing for the final day's inspection, the decisive interview, the certificates, the party in the evening. I was a little afraid of that last day, not so much for itself but for what it would bring afterwards.

My father, as Area Commander, would take the inspection and give the officer's badge to the girl who had come out on top. Her name was kept secret until the last day.

During all these preparations I had two letters from the Conants: one from Ned, of course, warm and charming, telling me that I was constantly in his mind. "I'm not a boy," he wrote, "I've had women before, but you are different, and when I met you something happened to me. You appeal to a man profoundly, and I find I am fully involved." He said the family

was going to their seaside cottage at once and that Lily would not be there. "My brother Bill, whom I hope you liked a lot, decided that she was a bit too tedious. I'm not surprised. Anyway, you'll have both the Conant sons to welcome you when you come, and one of them probably in love with you."

The other letter was unexpected, although I had secretly hoped for it. It was a short, hurriedly written note from Bill: "Hullo friend, pretty one. The lovely Lily has taken another path or, if you like, has been transferred to another post. Remember that we plan a long talk; it was you who suggested it. My brother pitches you into every conversation and seems to be badly hit. You'd better take care. I do like you. Brotherly yours, Bill."

Brotherly! He had a sense of humor, and could conceal whatever lay behind it. I would have to be cautious.

I also had a sweet letter from my brother Gal, telling me all about school and promising to come to the parade. "Father asked Mother if she thought you would mind his taking the inspection. I know you won't."

And so came the final day! First we rehearsed the parade. We formed up in lines—lines of strong, determined, happy faces, wearing stiff cadet hats which were so much more becoming than the berets—and stood, waiting to hear the name of the Number One Cadet announced. It was announced at the rehearsal because she would have to take up a special position on parade. It was difficult to guess which of the girls had deserved the honor. I couldn't think of anyone. My own marks had been the highest in the school, that I knew, and on the whole I had done fairly well. But I had decided that even if I had deserved to be Number One, I would not be chosen because people would say it was because I was the Area Commander's daughter.

Then came the announcement:

"Ariel Ron, Number 361950, you have received top marks and have been chosen as the Number One Cadet of this Course. You will step three paces forward, where, at the inspection, the Area Commander will pin the officer's badge to your collar. You will then salute, take your position at the head of the parade, which you will lead until it comes opposite the saluting base where the C. in C., attended by the Area Commander and the Commandant of the Camp, will take your salute. Is that clear?"

Had I heard aright? So it was I, after all. They had not been afraid of people saying I was privileged, which meant that I had really deserved the honor. For a moment I thought how funny it all was, and how little they really knew—me, chosen, as the book said, to be a "loyal, helpful, efficient friend and commander." I told myself that it was funny and yet, how would I have felt if it had been someone else? I wondered what my father would be thinking as I stepped forward three paces to receive my badge from him.

The rehearsal ended. Back in the big room I was showered with congratulations, and then a telegram from my mother was handed to me: "Am proud of the officer in the family." No tears fell as I read the telegram but the tears were there, close at hand. I folded the telegram carefully and put it in my pocket, then began ironing a shirt, while the other girls helped me to stiffen its collar. I polished my shoes and brushed my hair, but the minutes passed terribly slowly even though the time was too short for all that had to be done.

Gal, my brother, was the first of the family to appear. I begged the other girls not to tell him or my mother about my having been chosen as Number One Cadet. Gal looked oddly neat and tidy. "I've even combed my hair for you, Ariel." He had brought me a model boat he had made himself and I walked with him round the camp. He was dressed in a clean—for the moment—white shirt and blue shorts.

"If you were younger, I'd marry you, Ariel," Gal said.

"You can't marry your sister, Gal."

He thought for a second, then said, "I'll marry someone like you, then."

We walked to the dining room with its few paintings on the walls. It was dark and gloomy.

"Why don't they paint it a vivid color?"

"You see, Gal, it's an army camp, not a home."

"Yes, but . . . you live here, so it is a home. I don't think I like your camp. Do you?"

"Yes—today, anyway. One gets used to it. You remember how you hated your first school? But now when you pass it you always smile and pause to remember it. Well, it's the same."

His hand tightened around mine as he thought about it.

"I think I understand," he said.

When the time came, we marched on to the parade ground with an army band playing. It was a sunny afternoon. The parents of the cadets were seated on chairs at one end of the square. The flags were up and fluttering in a warm breeze. I felt light-hearted and proud. All my little schemes were forgotten for the moment. The band was playing and my feet were marching to its rhythm. Two cars arrived, one with the Commander in Chief, tall, broad-shouldered, pleasant-looking, and formal. He took his place at the saluting base. The other car drew up and my father stepped out of it; his cap sat tightly on his head and his slacks were not as neatly pressed as they might have been, but he looked every inch the Commander. He always looked it, even at home when I wished that he did not.

We arrived at the white lines drawn for us on the parade ground and took up our position, the school commander snapping her orders as we got ready for inspection. The C. in C., with my father, as Area Commander, passed through the lines on inspection, the subordinate commanders at their heels. I stood there stiffly, my face unmoving, and my eyes fixed on a

distant tree. I was hardly conscious of the passing inspection or of the clicking of cameras and the shuffle of cameramen as they came close to my face.

We closed lines. The Camp Commander then announced that Colonel Ron, the Area Commander, would present the officer's badge to Cadet Number One.

"361950, Cadet Ariel Ron, step forward, please!"

I think there was applause. Anyway, there was noise in the background. Cameras flashed and there was a strange light about, but what it was I didn't know. Here was I, Ariel, stepping towards my father. I saluted smartly. For a moment I wanted to laugh. He returned the salute, pinned the badge on my collar, and shook hands with me. I lifted my eyes. His own were hard but I got the impression that the hardness was forced. I saluted again, turned on my heels, and marched back to lead the parade past the applauding relatives and the saluting base and then off the parade ground, where we were allowed to fall out and join our families.

"How can you be so cold?" Tamar asked. "You didn't even smile. After all he is your father, you could have smiled at him."

"Because he is my father, I could not."

Gal jumped up to kiss me.

"Ariel, why didn't you tell me? You were wonderful. Did Daddy say anything to you?"

"No, Gal, he couldn't."

My mother had tears in her eyes and was very happy. My father was nearby, talking to the Commander in Chief. I heard the C. in C. say, "Well, Colonel, your daughter follows in your footsteps. Quite a competitor, she is, too."

My father joined us, smiled at me, and said, "Well done." He added, as an afterthought, "Choosing you as Number One means that you must have deserved it. But there'll be questions asked about it of course." He seemed ill at ease and said, "Am I supposed to stay?"

My mother said that of course he was, all the other fathers

were staying. He was obviously not very happy about it, but he stayed.

Next morning I wanted to get out of the place as quickly as I could, and packed in a hurry. My badges of rank shone from my shoulders. The M.P. at the gate saluted me. I said Shalom warmly to my fellow officers who had been in the course with me, and thanked the Commander. I had been given a week's leave, after which, according to my agreement with the Camp Commander, I was to take command of a recruit company.

I was sorry to leave Tamar; I wanted to see her again. She wasn't a friend, but it was a friendship.

She was going to the farm for a week, and then we were to meet as company commanders, only she had chosen to do it, and I had been forced to.

When I got home I thought my uniform, with its officer's rank plainly visible, looked better in the wardrobe, next to my father's.

My mother was having one of her unhappy spells, and wanted to talk to me about my father again. "Something must be wrong," she said, but begged me not to tell him that she had talked to me. She seemed to cry all the time, and Gal had noticed it and begun to wonder. She told me that she couldn't talk to my father.

"But I can't take it much longer. Ariel, what can I do?"

"It'll be all right, Mother. It's only a phase. He's a busy, anxious man and perhaps he doesn't see in a home what you do. His apparent indifference may be his way of relaxing. I could ask him, but—"

"Please don't. Please don't tell him you have talked to me. He'll get worse, then. Perhaps I have done something to annoy him."

Dear Mother—of course she hadn't done anything to annoy

him. She was unable to understand him—that was all. Perhaps she was maturing rather late and was only now beginning to understand the sort of man she had married. But it was hard for her.

I was pleased that she confided in me. It added another string to those I could pull. I loved her and really wanted to pull the strings for her benefit, but not at my father's expense.

But the atmosphere at home was gloomy and I wanted to get away. I wanted to join the Conants on the beach and have some fun. When I went to their cottage they seemed genuinely glad to see me. In the downstairs room they gave me, I changed into slacks and a shirt and beach sandals. I felt free and light-hearted.

What did I want from the two Conant boys? Unfortunately I wanted both of them, because they complemented each other. Ned was going to Jerusalem to work, but Bill was planning to live in the cottage and do his research work. They need never know about my relations with the other. I would plan the whole thing carefully in all its details.

Sometimes I would go to Ned, who was natural and completely at my disposal, doing all that I wanted him to and letting me do whatever I wanted, thoroughly relaxed and in a dream world of my own, while he moved around doing things for me. He admired me, took me out, brought me presents—a man easy to possess and to dominate. I was kind to him, but behaved like a spoiled child whenever I liked. I could be as capricious and as moody as I pleased with Ned. He was so adjustable.

I would not be bored. Besides, there was always Bill, here on the beach. Summer was approaching and later on I could come in the evenings, and stay the night. I would be fully a woman. I would have to do what he wanted me to, and probably I would like it. I would do things for him . . . cook and sew and make him dependent on me. I would have to give in to him and be his, but it would be complete. When I felt like a change, or

in need of tenderness and warmth, there would be Ned—only an hour's ride away.

But, Ariel, said a voice from deep down inside me, what if Bill doesn't want you? To which I answered: Any man would want me. I can be exactly what he wants a woman to be.

And if they find out about your stratagems?

They won't. I'll be tactful and careful. If we all meet it will be difficult, of course, but I'll see that we don't. I was certain they would not tell each other about me. Bill was afraid of hurting Ned. He might get cross with me (I would probably like it if he did) but their affection for each other was a card I could use. I wanted to win Bill's love and at the same time to keep Ned's love for me.

That night I walked along the beach with Ned. He put his arms around me and kissed me, and began planning our future together.

"I'll be in Jerusalem. I'll take a flat there. Now that you're an officer you'll have more time. You'll be able to come and see me often. We'll have a wonderful time. Let me know when you're free and I'll come and pick you up. You'll be my princess and we'll be alone, not like here."

He was fitting in with my plans.

It began to get cool and we went back to the cottage. Mr. and Mrs. Conant were asleep, but there was a light in Bill's room. Ned came with me to my room.

"No, Ned, not now. Leave me alone."

"When will you say yes, if ever? What's the matter, darling?"

"You wouldn't want me to do anything I don't want to do, would you? You'd feel sad about it afterwards"—the old line!

"So, my little girl worries about how I will feel afterwards! It can't go on like this, Ariel."

"Let's get to know each other better. And then . . . who knows?"

"Ariel, I'm a man, and I want you. My love isn't simply spiritual. You can't have things all your own way."

Why not? I felt that these were just words. I wasn't prepared to go as far as he wanted, knowing that if I did there would be no end to it. I looked up at him and he looked like his brother Bill. His eyes had lost their softness. I repeated, "No, Ned, not now."

"All right, Ariel, but listen: I'm terribly fond of you but I would prefer to have nothing to do with you. I realize that there's something dishonest about you, and rather dangerous—for me at any rate. I love you, but you hurt my pride. You are the most affectionate person in the world—when you are on the receiving end. When the time comes for you to give, you say quite calmly, 'No, Ned.' You'll be here another two days and I don't want my parents or Bill to think that anything's wrong. But I won't have anything more to do with you, or with the make-believe you enjoy. The game you like playing is not my game."

He left me, then. I smiled, but really there was nothing to smile about. Ned had walked out on me and Bill was not yet in my web. Would I be left alone? I remembered that Ned had said he loved me. There were two days left to work things out.

I heard the waves beating in against the shore. I felt the cool, white sheets of the bed, and the cool wind blowing in through the open window, but I hated my loneliness. I prayed to my gods, the gods of the strong. Surely they would hear me and help. The wind rose and I had to close my window.

The next morning a full summer sun greeted me.

At breakfast Mrs. Conant was all summery and sweet. There was something very nice about her. I felt she was the kind of person I would never want to hurt. Mr. Conant came in.

"So our Lieutenant is up." He kissed me on the cheek, and added, "I've been for a swim already, it's cold, but wonderful. Why don't you have a dip before breakfast?"

I changed into my light green swimming suit, which was modestly cut and not too low, but favored those parts of my body that deserved favors. Then I ran down the sandy slopes to the water. Behind me, Mr. Conant shouted, "The boys are there. Tell them breakfast's ready."

Ned and Bill were sitting in the sun, talking. Ned looked serious and was not saying much. Bill was talking quickly and decisively, and at the same time drawing circles in the sand. He stopped when I came up, and said, "Good morning, Ariel. Should I attribute my brother's moodiness to you?"

"Good morning, Bill, good morning, Ned. What did you say, Bill?"

Ned jumped up.

"Let's get into the water," he said, "and then have some breakfast."

He didn't look at me, but expected me to follow him into the water. We swam for a few minutes. Bill stayed on the beach, smiling all the time. Then Ned and I came out of the water, joined Bill, and we all went back to the cottage for breakfast.

The day that followed was not a pleasant one. For the most part we lay on the beach, doing nothing, avoiding conversation, and letting the time pass. Mr. and Mrs. Conant decided that we were relaxing. Ned made only casual remarks, and Bill every now and then gave me an inquiring glance. When the day ended we dressed and went to a neighboring hotel for dinner. By that time we were all in a better mood and the evening went well. We danced, talked light-heartedly, and were full of friendliness. Soon after ten o'clock Mr. and Mrs. Conant went back to the cottage and left me with the two boys. Bill, who liked dancing, was in high spirits.

"Let's dance, Ariel, if my brother doesn't mind."

"Your brother does mind, we'll go home!" said Ned sharply. I stared at him angrily, then looked at Bill, who looked surprised. I said, "Look, Ned. You said you were going to have

nothing more to do with me. Please stick to that. You've no right to order me around. I'm staying and Bill wants to stay, too."

"I said we were going home."

There was nothing more to say. Bill and I didn't want a scene so we tried to make the best of it and left with Ned. Outside, the sea overpowered our voices, and ahead of us was the sandy slope leading to the cottage. I took off my sandals and without a word began running towards the sea. I was angry and hurt and had tears on my cheeks. So that was it. I couldn't keep Ned and I was not to be given a chance to get friendly with Bill. And Ned had said that he loved me! I heard steps behind me and all at once a hand caught my shoulder. It was Ned. Behind him, dark against the sky, was Bill.

"You're coming home, Ariel," Ned said. "No scenes, please. And leave my brother alone, do you hear? Stop those silly tears, they won't help. You seem to learn your lessons the hard way, and slowly."

I pushed him away.

"Leave me alone."

I turned back from the sea and began running towards the cottage. When I came up to Bill, he called out, "Don't cry, Ariel."

I hurried back to the cottage alone and went to my room. In a few minutes I heard Bill outside my door saying to Ned, "I'd better go in, Ned. She's crying."

"Of course, go in if you want to. She's good at getting sympathy. Good night, Bill."

When Bill came in I was lying across the bed, really crying, with all my shame and hurt and anger in my tears. He sat next to me and stroked my hair with his hand. I sat up and leaned against him, pressing myself close to his chest. He took me and held me tight, stroking my hair and shoulders.

"I can't stay long, Ariel. Please relax. Tomorrow I'll talk to you. Look"—he held my chin—"you're really crying. Come,

just go to sleep and tomorrow all will be well. Ned didn't really mean to hurt you."

"I hate him, I hate him."

I clung to Bill. He took me and led me to bed.

"I must go," he said, "or Ned will be wondering what's keeping me. Good night, Ariel."

"Good night, Bill."

I fell asleep almost at once.

Next day Bill arranged for us to go to town together in the afternoon. From there we telephoned to say that we were staying for supper. We dined in a small restaurant and afterwards walked along the beach. At last, I thought to myself, we are alone. At least I had Bill. I liked him a lot and had lost my fear of him. His comments as we walked were appropriate and witty. Then he said, "So here we are talking. What happened between you and Ned?"

"Briefly, I wouldn't go to bed with him."

"I thought so. Ned's a proud man. You hurt him, and did so deliberately. You strung him along as long as it suited you and then turned and said good night."

"Must we talk about it, Bill?"

"No, let's talk about you. But where shall we start? You see, it's I who am going to do the talking. I'm going to tell you about Ariel Ron, the Lieutenant. She's not beautiful in the ordinary way, but there's something rather striking about her—the liveliness of her face, maybe. She's fully alive, has green eyes, and can never hide a rather devilish, calculating twinkling at the corners of those eyes; has a straight nose, a kissable mouth, thin but luscious lips, very soft, silky dark hair, a long neck, and olive skin. Her figure," he continued scientifically, "is very feminine and she knows it. She's not tall, rather round at the hips, has straight back, shoulders, and legs, a good, narrow waistline, and as much breast as any man can reasonably expect of a woman."

"Must you go into so many details?"

"Behind this figure and face lies Ariel Ron, who can be very gentle and charming as long as everything is going her way. When it's not—" he raised his finger warningly "—when it's not she can be thoroughly snakelike."

He grinned, and then went on:

"She thinks she can hold the strings of all the world in one hand and conduct her own little orchestra with the other simultaneously. She collects men on a chain and then hangs the chain on her bedroom wall as a decoration. She doesn't give anything unless she knows she can get better value in return. In short, she's a calculating, scheming bitch, but—" I tried vainly to break in upon his monologue, "—under it all she's a charmingly confused baby, a child trying to act like a grown-up woman, putting on superior airs to convince herself that she's not inferior. She needs a home, a certain amount of spanking, and a strong-willed man."

He made me angry, but I was also amused. He was smiling and his white teeth gleamed. He put his hand on my shoulder, took the cigarette from between my lips, drew me close to him, and kissed me. I wanted him to do that, but his roughness hurt me.

"Please, Bill, you're hurting me."

He took no notice of my appeals, but presently let me go and began undressing.

"What are you doing?"

"We're going for a swim."

He began unbuttoning my shirt, but left me to do the rest. His body shone in the moonlight.

"What if we're seen?"

"Here? Not a chance."

We ran over the beach and into the water. I was shivering and felt confused and uncertain. Was he playing a game with me, or was he serious? I liked him very much indeed.

"You do like me, though, don't you Bill?"

"Like you? I despise the ground you walk on. Of course I like

you, little one, I like you very much, but I can afford it."

We had our swim and then came back to the beach and rested. His fingers were warm and strong and his mouth tasted salty. I couldn't think of anything to say. Our two beautiful bodies enjoyed each other on the golden sand under the light of the moon.

We dressed after three in the morning and I felt exhausted but relaxed.

"I'm leaving tomorrow at twelve, Bill. Shall I see you again?"

"Of course. I think I'm going to fall in love with you. But we'd better be careful."

"With whom?"

"With Ned. I can't hurt him. He'll wonder why I'm so late, now. We'd better think up a story."

"Let's say we've been talking."

"It would be better to say that you've been talking to me and keeping me late. Will you stick to that, Ariel? There will be five long hours before you leave. It'll be hard for me, too, because there are thousands of things I want to say to you and do with you. But it will have to wait. It'll be tough for you, little Ariel."

"Don't worry about me. You go in first. I'll follow. Maybe Ned is awake."

"Tough" was an understatement. I had never felt so tense before, and almost regretted the whole thing. But there was hope of a happy future with Bill, and the unpleasant parts could be forgotten.

I had a feeling of guilt as I left my room for breakfast. Mrs. Conant apparently had heard all about it from Ned—"Ariel kept poor Bill up until four o'clock. He's dead tired and won't be able to do any work today." She looked at me and nodded coldly. So did Mr. Conant. I wanted to tell them everything: that I had fallen for Bill, and he for me. They would under-

stand, I thought. Instead, I kept aloof and silent, accepting their accusing looks, which seemed to say: So, you've messed up our two sons. And we were so kind to you.

And I really loved them all, and had felt so much at home with them. It had been idiotic to go off like that, last night, but it was unfair of Bill to let all the blame fall on me.

He got up late and played the game we had decided on.

"I hope tonight you find someone else to talk to," he said, "someone who hasn't got work to do the next day."

"I'm sorry, Bill. I didn't notice the time. I just had to talk to someone. You should have reminded me of the time."

"I couldn't be rude, could I?"

The rest of the family stood around listening. Mr. Conant suggested that we all go for a swim. While we were swimming Bill came up to me and said, "We're doing fine. Just hang on."

But the tension continued to mount. Every word seemed to be either meaningless, irrelevant, or quietly intended to hurt me. Ned was enjoying the situation. He had been right to get rid of me in time. I bore it all without resentment, blaming only myself. For the first time in my life I felt helpless, because I did care deeply for Bill and I didn't want to lose him. Perhaps one day he would let me tell his parents what really happened. I also felt betrayed because I liked Ned, too, as much as when I had first met him. Bill was different. He was a man I wanted to belong to, exclusively, and that was something that had not happened to Ariel Ron before.

I smoked too many cigarettes that morning, pretended to be asleep as we lay on the beach, and once wished I could move the clock forward. Camp, army, home—anything seemed better than being here. I couldn't understand why Bill kept looking at me accusingly with contempt in his eyes. When the time came for me to go I kissed Mr. and Mrs. Conant, thanked them, and said good-by. The two boys were to take me to the station. I took my small suitcase and got ready to leave.

"Coming?" I asked at the door.

"Ned is," said Bill. "He wants to talk to you. I'll stay behind."

"Either you both come or I'll go alone," I said. I was afraid of being left alone with Ned. There was something odd about the way he looked at me.

"I want to talk to you," he said. "I don't think you'd want Bill to hear what I have to say to you."

"Bill can hear anything. He's heard a lot already. If he can't, then I don't want to either and I shall go alone."

In the end they both came. Ned said how different I was from what I had seemed at first, or had pretended to be. He hoped never to see me again. His voice was hard and unpleasant and I was exploding with anger. My eyes searched Bill's for a sign of friendliness. I listened for a kind word, waited for the warm touch of his hand. But he seemed to be utterly unconcerned and indifferent. I fought back my tears and felt very much alone.

"Stop it!" I cried.

But his voice got louder and with a cruel smile about his lips he said, "In addition to everything else you take my brother out and keep him up all night to listen to your trivialities."

This was too much.

"Can't Bill speak for himself?"

"No," said Ned. "Bill's better than you think. He won't say anything and you should thank him."

Thank him! Suddenly I felt that I didn't care any more, and wouldn't take it any longer. Perhaps it was the tension of the morning working inside me, or the idea that I still had Bill anyway, and that jealousy between the brothers was inevitable sooner or later. I knew that Ned would be hurt, but Bill had said he loved me. I turned to Ned:

"Listen, Ned. This story about my talking all night was one we fixed up so as not to hurt you. But now it's gone too far—much too far for me. Your precious brother, whom you think I ought to thank, was making love to me last night."

I stopped and took a step back. Ned looked at Bill, and said "Don't!" But Bill came forward and slapped my face, hard.

Tears came to my eyes and I couldn't stop them. Ned was laughing—a good, strong, satisfied laugh.

"You can go on with her, Bill, if you want to," he said.

Bill went up to Ned, put an arm around his shoulder, and said, "Let's both leave. I've nothing at all to do with Ariel. I love her as you do, but let's get going. She can manage by herself."

The two brothers, strong-looking and tall, walked off. I shall never see them again, I thought. I had been thoroughly defeated, and not at a game in which I deserved to be beaten. My cheeks burned, the tears fell; let them fall, I thought, and let the brothers go—there are always others. But it was not a completely comforting thought as Bill and Ned disappeared round a bend in the road. But why think about it? Why dig back into memory? One tower had fallen and I must build another and stronger one.

It was hot as I walked, but the breeze from the sea was damp and salty. At the bus station there was a bench. I had ten minutes to wait so I sat there. And if ever I went through ten minutes thoroughly empty of thought, they were those ten minutes. The bus came. I went to town, went into a café, and had a large black coffee.

"No sugar, please."

I was uneasy when I returned to camp. My leave had been far from agreeable or relaxing. At home I had left the situation as I found it, mainly because I had been too concerned with my own affairs to bother much about my parents', and had not attempted to talk matters over with my father. Now I was expected to take command of sixty recruits for whom I felt no enthusiasm, and to turn them into soldiers in a few weeks. I was in a bitter mood.

As officers we were put to sleep four to a room. Some of our evenings were free, and during the day, when the platoon com-

manders were in charge of training and the officers concerned chiefly with inspection, we could occasionally take a few hours off and run into town; but this didn't happen often.

On my arrival at the camp I went to the room allotted to me and there found Tamar, sprawled on a bed. I flung my bags down and greeted her grimly. She smiled back at me and said, "How goes your affair with the brothers?"

This was the last straw.

"Very well, thank you." I said.

But my voice and appearance must have told her the truth.

"Sorry, Ariel," she said, "I didn't want to annoy you. You'd better get ready. We've all got to be at the Commandant's office in fifteen minutes. See you there."

She went from the room, apparently feeling hurt. I suppose I had snapped at her, but at least I had not asked her how her love affairs were progressing. She probably went to the village, and had long nights in the vineyards and walks along the fields with the boy she was going to marry. I could imagine them planning their future, while I was running in circles trying to catch my own tail. Trying to turn magic handkerchiefs into rabbits—and being disappointed when they turned back into squares of silk.

I followed her to the Commandant's office where we were given our orders. I was allotted to Company A and was to take over at four o'clock in the afternoon, when the NCO who would be in charge of the Company until then, would introduce me to my command. For most of the day I sat about vaguely thinking of Bill and Ned, of my mother, and of my brother Gal, and listening to the others discussing what they ought to say to their recruits when they took over at four. Tamar was sitting beside me just before we went out to the parade ground. She turned to me and said quietly:

"Ariel, what kind of Commander will you try to be?"

"I won't 'try.' I'll just be a naturally bad one."

"Why?"

"Several reasons. In the first place I don't like women very much. Secondly I hate any group of sixty people gathered into one lump. Thirdly I don't want to command anyone and certainly not people who don't interest me."

Tamar laughed.

"Will you be hard on them?"

"Not just for the sake of being hard. I won't be motherly either. I just don't know what I'll be."

Tamar wanted to know what I was going to say to the Company when I took over command; I could only tell her that I would say whatever came into my head. "I'll tell them to keep their guns greased and their eyes and ears open and to salute at the right time. I shall also tell them they've got nothing to fear."

It was five minutes to four, so I broke off the conversation with Tamar, dressed quickly, fixed my old beret to my head, and set off to the large wooden shed where the handing over was to take place.

The NCO called the Company to attention as I came in, turned to salute me, and reported that all were present and correct. I returned the salute and turned to my Company.

"You may all sit down," I said. "And you may take those berets off and relax."

I took advantage of the interval created by their settling down to observe my precious recruits. Most of them still looked ill-adjusted to their new uniforms; there were several pale, frightened faces and many nervously inquiring eyes. There was nothing challenging in their looks, no sign of readiness to measure wits. They were gazing at me to see if they could find someone to depend on, someone to warm them, someone who would help them in their confusion. It made me feel uncomfortable. I had expected them to face me with a certain hostile confidence. Instead, they gave me the impression of pleading for help. It was a form of weakness I had never been able to fight against. I smiled at them and began my brief lecture:

"You have one advantage over me," I began. "You know my

name. I hope soon to learn yours. All I can tell you now is that when the training period is over, you will look back to this first day as an amusing episode.

"I am here for one purpose: to be a help to you. You won't like it here very much. Nobody does. But no one is supposed to, just as no one is supposed to like a war. You will learn to use weapons not because it is fun, but because you happen to be Israelis and Israeli girls, like Israeli men, must know how to defend their country if it is attacked.

"The only way to make the best of it is to get to like each other, help each other, salute as often as you have to, and do cheerfully any of the other damnable things soldiers have to do. Take as much coffee and as many biscuits at the canteen as you can afford. You won't get as fat that way as you will eating from the big pots in the mess room.

"The corporals will give you detailed orders. And remember that if there is one thing I will not put up with it is lateness on parade or in the performance of any other duties.

"As for me, your officer, you will address me as Lieutenant Ariel. You can keep your salutes for the senior officers; you need not salute me. You can talk to me freely and frankly and I hope that you will soon discover that there is nothing to be alarmed about here. It will be cold getting out of bed at the crack of dawn; you will find some of the training hard. But our men train under much tougher conditions and for a longer period. Besides, you're lucky that it isn't the time of year for rain.

"I'm not going to punish, hurt, favor, or bite any of you, and forget whatever terrifying stories you may have heard about this place. They're not true. Now, any questions?"

One girl said falteringly, "Lieutenant Ariel, must we really sleep with our guns?"

"Yes, really and truly. You'll get used to it, and when the weather is hot it will cool you. Guns are not toys. They are costing this little country of ours a dickens of a lot of money. I shan't

much mind if you go without a shower for six weeks, but I shall mind a lot if you don't keep your guns clean and well greased."

"Can we write home?" The question came from a sad-looking, dark-haired girl at the back.

"Of course you can't send a plan of the camp, or details of what is in the armory. But you may write whatever else you like. The censor won't mind if you tell your mothers or your boy friends that you hate every moment in camp."

Questions continued for another ten minutes or so. Then the corporal called the Company to attention, saluted me, and took charge. After I had left the shed and the girls had been set free for the rest of the afternoon, one of my new command, a short, fat girl, came to me and asked if she might talk to me for a moment.

"It's about the night watch," she said. "I just can't be alone at night. I get frightened to death and I don't want the other girls to know it. Really, Lieutenant Ariel, I can't be alone in the dark."

"What is your name?"

"Judith."

"All right, Judith, I'll see what can be done about it."

Judith went off happily enough, but the conversation had upset me. It made me realize how much I feared my new responsibilities. All my eager notions about exercising power vanished. I had no sense of power and no desire to enforce my will. I realized that my Company was like a nursery, the girls like little children learning to walk. I must handle them delicately, with kid gloves, not—as I had thought before—with sharp words and a stick. I had no taste, God knows, for acting either the nurse or the mother!

Each of these girls was an individual and each, separately, had to be introduced to the army life ahead of them. Account would have to be taken of each girl's character, her personal problems and desires. It would require the kind of patience I was not very good at except when it served my own interests.

And this business didn't seem to serve any interest of mine. I could see no possible gain to me in helping a group of girls to become good soldiers. My philosophy of life had always led me to invest my energies where profit was fairly certain, or to hoard them until the chances of gain improved. I began to see my immediate future as likely to be pretty empty and fruitless. I thought about Bill and Ned. Had I failed completely there? If I had, it did not matter—except that all that was now left for clever and superior me to be clever and superior about were these toddling children, these meek and frightened recruits ready to become utterly dependent on me. According to my calculations, this was nothing to boast about.

Next day I had to take the usual morning inspection. I remembered how I had despised the inspection when I myself was a recruit: the rushed last moments, the fear that some trivial thing would not be in order, the relief when it was all over. What did I care if there was dust on the window ledge, if the uniforms had been properly pressed, the floor swept, or the kitbags put in the right place? For that matter, what did I care if Judith was afraid of the dark?

The Company stood in two rows, ready for inspection, and I heard the girls whispering to each other—"Here she comes. Hope she slept well"—just as we used to whisper to each other when I started out as a recruit. The whispering stopped as I came closer. I stared at each face in turn; all so serious, so tense, so nearly breathless.

"What's your name?" I asked one.

"Naomi, Lieutenant Ariel."

"Well, Naomi, does this belong to you?" I took a handkerchief from beneath her bed. I could see that she was nervous and that she was nearly in tears. I smiled at her. "Push it under the mattress next time and I won't notice it."

To another I said, "Why are you wearing sandals?"

"My shoes don't fit and they told me I wouldn't be able to change them for several days."

"Come and see me after the inspection and we'll get some shoes that fit."

I moved professionally up the lines, straightening a beret here, stretching a blanket there, carefully inspecting every gun for signs of dust or sand. One of the girls obviously had not cleaned her gun. She explained that she hadn't had time, she had been sweeping the path.

I sent her out with orders to clean and polish the gun and then take it to the corporal for inspection.

Another had not polished her shoes. She said her name was Gallia and she hadn't polished her shoes because she didn't know how to. "I've never done it before."

"Who polished your shoes at home?"

"We had a maid who did it."

I looked about me and saw, nearby, a short, very dark, sweet-faced girl who said her name was Rachel. Certainly Rachel's family had never had a maidservant.

"Rachel," I said, "get brushes and polish and take Gallia outside and teach her how to clean shoes." I turned to Gallia. "And you, Gallia, see that your shoes shine like mirrors tomorrow."

"Yes, Lieutenant Ariel."

Inspection over, I turned to the girls and said, "It was a bad display, really. But for the first day you did very well. Remember that the first day only happens once. Now you are dismissed."

I went off with the girl whose shoes didn't fit and after a brief struggle with the storeman managed to get what was needed. Then a curious-looking, sad-faced, freckled girl came up to me with a letter in her hand, saying that she needed a few hours' leave.

"My mother is ill. It says so in the letter."

I looked at her and became convinced that she was lying. Her face had turned a rich red.

"I must have your request for leave in writing," I said.

She had that ready, too, and handed it to me. I compared it with the letter telling of her mother's supposed illness and saw that both letters were written in the same hand.

The girl's name was Hannah. I told her to come to my room. She followed confidently, and in the room I said, "Why do you want a leave, Hannah?"

"I told you. My mother is ill."

"Yes, I heard you. But both these letters were written by you. You must have a reason for it. What is it?"

She hung her head and muttered, "Well, if you won't let me go, you won't."

She got up to go.

"Sit down, Hannah. Tell me why you want a leave."

"It's my boy friend," she said. "He's leaving the country for several months and I want to see him off."

"Well, you can't, and the reason you can't is that you told a silly lie. You should have been frank at the beginning about why you wanted to go. That's all. Go back to your quarters."

Later, when I passed the barracks, one of the girls came to me and said, "Excuse me, Lieutenant Ariel, we all think you should allow Hannah to see her mother."

"I'm sorry. She cannot. Hannah knows perfectly well why she cannot, but that's between her and me."

"The Company thinks it's unfair."

"The Company has a Commander to do its thinking."

I made no plan of campaign for the period of my command. I decided simply to live through the period by acting according to the merits of each case and each incident. It was not easy, and it meant behaving out of character most of the time.

At the end of the week it was our Company's turn to mount guard. I went to the barracks to make out a list of those who were to go on guard duty and asked casually, "Anyone like to volunteer for the night watch?"

It was a lonely duty. Surely nobody would volunteer for it.

"Please, Lieutenant Ariel, I'd like to."

I looked round, surprised. It was a quiet girl, who didn't seem to mix very well with the others.

"Good," I said. "I'll put you on the list, then."

Surely, Ariel Ron was the only one who had ever really wanted to go on the lonely night watch. I could hardly believe this girl. I always found it difficult to believe that anyone else had the same tastes and motives as I had. I thought perhaps the girl had some extraordinary reason for wanting to go on night watch, so when I saw her alone I went casually up to her and asked her.

"Just to be alone," she said, with a faint smile. "I like being alone."

I was annoyed but was at pains not to show it. Then I hung the list on the door and went out. I heard someone running after me and turned to see the pleading eyes of Judith, who had come to me on the first day with her fears of being alone in the dark.

"Lieutenant Ariel," she said, "please! I told you I cannot be left alone in the dark and you've put me down for the night watch. You cannot . . . I'm sorry . . . but you cannot . . ."

"It's all right, Judith, don't worry. I'll watch with you."

Why did I say it? Why should I hold Judith's hand in the dark? Why didn't I put her on some other guard duty, with another girl, and let them gossip through the night? Why should I go to the trouble of trying to teach this girl how to overcome her fear? I asked myself these questions irritably but, inside me, answered them gently.

The night fell. It was a bright night and Judith went with her gun to the place I had indicated and I told her I would follow in a few minutes. When I got there I found her sitting on the ground, tensely waiting.

"You won't leave me?" she pleaded.

"No, I won't leave you. But don't be frightened, Judith."

It was like calming a child who wakes crying in the night. I talked quietly to her, and together we walked about.

"What is it that you fear, Judith?"

"I don't really know. Every bush seems to come alive. And the branches of the trees sound like someone talking. I keep thinking I can see or hear someone."

"Maybe you can, in a way. Look at that tree opposite. It's a tired tree. The branches lean towards that other, lower tree and they talk about once upon a time when they were branches of a young and flourishing tree. Look at that bush, stare at it as hard as you can. It looks like a girl wrapped up and asleep. It is asleep, of course. It's called the lazy one because it hardly ever moves."

Judith laughed quietly, and I went on:

"Listen to the birds fussing about. They've got fledglings in their nests that won't go to sleep. You see that funny shape over there? Don't be afraid of it, it's just a heap of tools left behind by some of the girls, who will have to be punished for carelessness. You can watch and listen and tell yourself about the lazy bush that couldn't get to sleep because the birds kept fussing; and the big tree, the old one there, shaking its branches as you can see and telling everybody to shut up and go to sleep. You can make up quite a good story, and begin to have friendly feelings towards the trees, the bushes, and the birds that are with you in the dark. . . ."

Later, I said, "Judith, I've got to leave you for a moment with all your new friends. Do you mind? I must go and see if everything is all right at the gate."

She was hesitant, and said, "It is dark, isn't it! No, Lieutenant Ariel, I don't mind. You go."

I was away for about thirty minutes. When I came back, Judith said very quietly, "I was very silly, Lieutenant. Don't stay. Thank you very much. I feel all right, now. Next time the Company is on guard please put me on the night watch again."

"Good girl. Have a pleasant watch, Judith."

These girls were my own age or older. What gave me such influence over them? I began to notice in myself two completely new qualities: one was patience, the other a curious interest in others, instead of only in myself. It would be less than the truth to say that I felt unhappy about these new developments in my character. I was thoroughly confused, surprised, and even furious with myself. I decided that I would fight against whatever was happening to me and make sure that it was only temporary. I wondered about punishment—a little punishment to put them all in their places. God knew they often deserved it!

That night, feeling bitterness and perhaps a desire to revenge myself on these girls, I waited until after midnight and then got up quietly from my bed, threw on working slacks, boots and sweater and a beret, and walked to the barracks.

The sleeping quarters were in complete darkness. Not a sound came from rows of beds except for an occasional snore. I adjusted my eyes to the darkness and then moved slowly between the beds. I saw what I expected to see—an uncovered gun. I stretched out my hand, gripped the gun, and slowly drew it from the bed. I could hear my heart beating as I did it.

With the gun in my hand I went back to the door, switched on the main lights, and waited.

There were restless movements in some of the beds and a good deal of unintelligible muttering. In a loud voice I told the Company to get out of bed. I went between the rows, tugging at blankets and hurrying the sleepy ones.

"Get up and dress, all of you," I called. "Take your guns and helmets and form up outside the barracks in five minutes."

"What's the time?" someone asked.

"Questions afterwards. Get a move on."

Frightened, puzzled, and rubbing their eyes, they did as they were told and lined up outside, whispering to each other.

"Silence!" I ordered. "Anyone who speaks out of turn will regret it."

I ordered them to left-turn, balance guns, and march: *left-right, left-right, left right* . . . My voice echoed in the still night.

I was not thinking, made no effort to explain to myself what I was doing and why. I merely gave the rhythm and watched the girls vaguely. I could see that they were frightened. Their sweet, kind Lieutenant Ariel had turned out to be quite different from what they had thought. They knew I had found an uncovered gun: I was carrying it with me, and besides, one of the girls was marching without one. None of them protested against what I was making them do. They were helpless and utterly yielding.

We marched for three hours, getting hotter and hotter. The first beams of the morning sun lit up weary, sweaty faces. The guns had grown heavy. Even the one I was carrying felt five times as heavy as usual. Feet ached. We did a wide detour and were about to return to camp when I called the Company to a halt and said, "I'm beginning to think I've been to lenient with you, and you've got slack. You'd better bear in mind that you get what you deserve in the end—and there's still time for me to see that you get it."

I gave the offending girl her gun back and added, "This is not the only gun I could have taken as you lay asleep. Now watch yourselves."

We marched back to the camp. Before dismissing the Company I told them to be ready for morning exercises as usual, in fifteen minutes, with their guns.

I returned to my room, had a shower, changed into another uniform, and began to feel better.

Why had I done it? It was not the uncovered gun. If I hadn't found that I could have found some other equally valid reason for getting them out of bed and taking them on a route march. I had certainly had no wish to march for several hours.

I was providing myself with some kind of a proof, but proof of what? I suppose I felt that it would restore my self-assurance, bring me back to my own personality—calculating, superior, and unresponsive to sentiment. But I knew now that the experi-

ment hadn't worked properly. The result was thin and incomplete.

The only thing left for me to do was to go home that night. There, at any rate, I could master the situation. I felt as sure of that as a gambler feels of his "system." It was my secret system and I wanted to prove that it worked. Not that I was a gambler in the real sense. I moved very cautiously in everything I did, and always wanted to be sure of my ground before I stepped on it. But the area of soft ground seemed to be getting smaller and smaller. Should I take risks and gamble against the odds in order to broaden it, or ought I to be satisfied with pacing up and down the same small square? For the moment, my parents' home was a safe square. I could pace up and down in it and decide what to do next.

When I reached the house that night I found my mother alone. She had been crying, her eyes were red, she complained of a headache, and she did her best not to tell me what the trouble was this time. She went to bed eventually and I sat beside her. Then she could not keep it to herself any longer.

"He forgot the date," she cried.

"Who did? What date?"

"Your father. Our wedding anniversary was yesterday and he forgot all about it." She took my hand. "Promise me, Ariel, that you won't say anything to him. By itself it's probably unimportant, but added to everything else—oh, Ariel, you do understand, don't you?"

"Yes, Mother, I understand. Try to get some sleep."

"I'm proud of you, Ariel," she said. Then she switched off the bedside lamp.

Her sadness was in the walls of the room and hovering in the damp sea air. I felt her loneliness even in the touch of the bedcover draped over a chair, and of her dress hanging neatly from a peg. Her tears were warm and silent, and she lay there, so passive and utterly defeated, that I suddenly longed to take her to a sunny place and make her laugh.

I left her bedroom and went to my own, got into pajamas and a dressing gown and sat waiting in the living room, with a cup of tea I had made myself. Presently my father came in. He looked tired and depressed, threw his cap into a chair beside the door, and then changed his shoes for slippers.

"Anyone awake to feed me?" he asked.

He never went into the kitchen himself if he could help it.

"Yes," I said. "I suppose I am."

"Good; but what are you doing here instead of camp?"

"Making you an omelette and some coffee," I said, as I moved towards the kitchen.

While I cooked I tried to think of some way of gaining his confidence and sympathy; some way to start a conversation that would be intimate, but that he would listen to and respond to. He was quite willing to talk about my mother as a rule, since he cared a great deal about what I thought, and feared I might get wrong ideas about him from her. So I marched in:

"Father, it was your wedding anniversary yesterday."

He looked up, surprised.

"Was it? I forgot all about it. Is Mother angry?"

"She's been crying a great deal. You know what she's like and how easily she gets hurt. She'll never understand that you meant no harm."

"Ariel, stop!"

My mother stood at the door in a light purple dressing gown, her face pale.

"You told him!"

"Yes, Mother, I did. He's got to know these things."

"But you promised not to." She was crying again.

I looked at my father for help or support. But his face had become the expressionless wax mask I always feared. His eyes were hard, angry, full of contempt, and his voice was coldly quiet when he spoke.

"Ariel, the planner again! Why don't you mind your own

business for a change? If even your mother can't trust you to keep your promises to her, you won't get very far."

I got up from my chair.

"Good night," I said.

"Sit down! You think you can get away with this as you think you can get away with everything. A sweet, helpful, understanding little daughter! In fact, you're what the Americans call a double-crosser. The innocent mediator, the gentle link between your father and your mother. You'd be surprised if you knew how unnecessary that is. I can talk without your help, and your mother, too, if there's any need to talk. I hoped the army would teach you loyalty.

"These stories of yours about your mother being unhappy really mean that you're unhappy, that you want expression for your emotions. You use us both to play at being a god, at putting poor, weak humans to rights.

"I love you, Ariel—" his voice was quieter now, but still cold and sure "—and so does your mother. But our love for you cannot be at the expense of our love and respect for each other. Now you'd better go to bed."

He took my mother in his arms and together they went to their bedroom.

I went to my room, dressed in uniform, and went to where my brother Gal lay sleeping. He looked sweet and relaxed in his sleep. I drew up the light blanket to cover him and then left his room and the house.

It was raining, the last rain before the dry, hot period set in. We call it the *Malkosh* in Hebrew. The heavy drops of the *Malkosh*, warm and big, drew steam from the warm pavement. It was nearly midnight, but hardly knowing what I was doing, I went into town. I had a hopeless, lonely feeling, a feeling that I had nowhere to go. Circling round and round I realized that all the seats were occupied; the knobs of every door I tried to open broke off in my hand.

But Ariel Ron couldn't feel like that, or tell herself such nonsense! I shook myself and laughed. Me left with nowhere to go! What about all my admirers, my friends, the letter writers, the party givers—what about them? They loved my company. They would open doors for me at my slightest knock.

It was not I, it was not Ariel Ron who wandered through the city streets on that *Malkosh* night. It was an unrecognizable person in uniform and sandals, with wet feet, hair drawn back in horsetail fashion, soaking wet, her face wet, too, even the eyelashes holding raindrops for a second and then flicking them to the cheeks; and the leather handbag dangling from her shoulders wet, streaming.

The sandals struck hurriedly at the pavement as if afraid of missing some urgent assignation, as if chasing someone, face stretched and tense, eyes cold and frightened. Was it really fear? I asked myself that and denied that it could be fear: perhaps merely resentful disappointment.

Tel Aviv was so fixed and white and square, so much like a modern painting of squares and cubes and lines, but I felt so round and stiff, that I couldn't be adjusted into the picture.

I could always go to Dan. He had begged me to take him back. He would hold me affectionately and say he loved me and then I could go back to camp and forget the scene at home. Yes, that I could do. I could always go to Dan. I was still fond of him. It would be warm and dry there and I could wipe the pain from my face and he would say that he liked my eyes and would ask me to smile, and perhaps I would.

I found myself outside his house and there was light shining through the window. He would be reading a book, or listening to some concert record on his phonograph.

I climbed the stairs and thought how silly I had been to give back the key, that night.

At the door I suddenly withdrew my finger from the bell. There were voices on the other side. But there could not be, not at this time of night! Perhaps it was the radio.

I touched the doorbell but again withdrew the pressure of my finger. It was Dan's voice—and a woman's. A woman in Dan's apartment at night? All the long months that I had not bothered to call on him or get in touch with him didn't matter. Ariel was at Dan's door. Dan loved her—and he was with another woman!

My thoughts were bitter and confused. Everything was going wrong. Surely I had a right to expect faithfulness from Dan? He had said he loved me, but now, when I needed him so much, he was with another woman.

Obviously he wasn't worthy of me I decided as I went down the stairs. I imagined him holding her face between his hands and stroking her hair. She could not possibly be prettier than I, or more agreeable; but there she was, warm and cozy, while I was back in the rain, with nowhere to go. If he could forget me in such a short time, he could never have been worthy of me. He was an ordinary man, and satisfied with any woman. Lucky woman though, I thought.

The street lamps had long shadows, and cars moved slowly up and down the wet road. I went to the house of another friend, but closed doors and darkened windows met me. At a third door I found the same. I went to a fourth, but through a window I saw people standing about with glasses in their hands. A party was being given, tonight of all nights. Afterwards people would laugh at me and say: "Ariel Ron? Yes, of course, I met her at a party. She came in looking most unusual, soaking wet in uniform, and very late, too."

I decided that I didn't care for parties, anyway. All I wanted was somewhere dry and warm. But there was nowhere, nowhere I could go. The town was locked against me. The shutters looked blindly at me. The doors threatened. The moon slipped out from between clouds and glared at me. The warm,

wet wind was indifferent. I hurried forward. It is only when you don't know where you are going that you hurry, and yet stand still.

It was the loneliest moment I had ever known. Only God was left and I got myself into a panic because it wasn't my god. My god had crept behind the doors, melted into corridors and dark paths, and wasn't there any more.

I began to run, careless of the surprised looks of the few people about, skipping back to the pavement at the warning sound of a car. But it was a purposeless flight and full of fear. The street was full of the whistle and rustle of wind that seemed to be celebrating my defeat. I felt utterly beaten.

My parents were in bed, warm and contented. Gal was beautifully asleep. Dan was busy with another woman. Others were at parties or asleep; even if they were awake, they were lost to me. Ned and Bill mocked my failure. My Company of recruits were numbers in a darkened barracks; even in camp my authority counted for nothing.

I felt myself steadily shrinking, and everything outside me growing bigger, nibbling at my pride and swallowing noisily, so that I got smaller and smaller and felt so small that I should have been able to pass between the bars of windows. I felt myself disintegrating and falling into little bits that lay among the stones kicked by passers-by.

My tower of planned triumphs was a very poor thing now, folding up and vanishing like a scene in a movie. I was helpless. In the scene with my parents, in the talk in Dan's flat, in the clinking of glasses at the party, my god had gone.

I stopped running and began to walk, trying to think, or feel more reasonable about what was happening. The rain had lessened and I saw that I was in a district I didn't know. I looked about me as though I was newborn in this odd world; but nothing looked back at me. Then I heard a man's voice saying, "Will the lovely Lieutenant have a drink with me?"

I walked on quickly, but I could hear his steps behind me. He

caught up with me and said, "Honestly, I only want company. Don't lady lieutenants drink?"

The street was empty. I turned and said, "Please leave me alone."

I hurried forward and he gave up. By then I had come to a crossroads. I felt like squatting on the pavement, my back against a lamppost, and closing my eyes. But I stood and glanced dumbly around me, surveying the scene, not noticing anything in particular.

I felt odd and unreal and lonely, and catching sight of my shadow, I talked to it.

"Hello," I said to the shadow, and touched my hat.

"Hello," it said. "Who are you, you strange-looking girl?"

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I am Ariel," it replied.

The shadow moved slightly as the breeze moved the lamp.

"Wait a minute," I said. "It is I who am Ariel."

The shadow flickered doubtingly. I tried to step on it, and moved away from the light; but then it showed clearly on the white wall in front of me. It was facing me now.

"No," it said, "no, godless person. I am Ariel. A shadow, perhaps, but that's all there is to Ariel. And don't underestimate a shadow. You see, you cannot wave *me* away."

I was tired and unhappy and confused. I realized I was talking to myself, but all this could easily have been real. I felt embarrassed and cross.

"Of course you are not Ariel," I said. "You have no substance, no mind with ideas, no god."

The wind blew and the shadow trembled. "Shadows have gods, too," it said.

I began walking towards the autobus station, but every now and then I would glance behind me to make sure that the shadow was still following me. I would hurry quickly between one lamppost and another, to make sure that the shadow was

still there. Somehow, it was a comfort to me to feel its presence. I was too tired to think the matter out properly.

It was very late when I arrived at the camp. It was the only place left for me to go, and pretty dreary it looked, too. My companions were fast asleep so I undressed in the corridor and got into army pajamas, which felt warm and dry. Then I tiptoed to my bed. Through the window I could see the sky clearing. A pale, neutral, noncommittal moon moved through the sky—or the clouds moved by the moon. All was soft and smoothly in motion up there.

Classification day had passed. It was nearly the end of the term. There was only another week to go. I thanked God for that and I am sure that the recruits were thanking God, too. They had put up with me for long enough. But on my bed that night I found a parcel wrapped neatly in white paper, and opened it to find a decorated ash tray with a note: "To kind, warmhearted Lieutenant Ariel, from Company A."

Tears wet my pillow before I fell asleep. The morning came too soon. I felt hardly well enough to go through the usual morning inspection. My throat was sore and my limbs ached. The long, gloomy barracks, with their small, unsuccessful gardens, had a mournful look about them. After the confusion of my evening at home and the recruits' gift, I felt unable to face up to anything. All I wanted to do was pack and go with my shadow to some far away place, and start with new people, new thoughts, and new deeds.

But there was the inspection chore ahead of me and I had to go through with it. I did it casually, all my gestures and motions implying complete indifference. At the end of it I faced the Company and said, "It was very nice to find your present last

night. Thank you very much. We have rifle practice today so be ready with your guns at the ammunition depot in ten minutes."

To give the order *Fire!* for the first time is a frightening experience. When I was a recruit, sprawled, as these girls were now sprawled, in a long line broken into tens, I aimed my gun carefully, waited without nervousness for the order to fire, and then pressed the trigger. Now, responsible for giving the order myself, I could almost feel the nervous breathing of the girls. I could see their hands tensed whitely on the guns, and the beads of sweat on their faces reflecting the sun. The heat lay heavily around us and there was complete silence. I was infected somehow by the tension of the Company waiting for me to shout the order. I had always disliked the sound that followed the sharp issuing of the order. I knew that I would dislike it now, and after the shots had been fired, would feel with the girls a quick relief as they set their guns to rest against the low, sandy hillock, wiped their sweating hands on their slacks, and felt their heartbeats slowly returning to normal.

That day, as I stood waiting, one of the girls, Esther, broke away from the third group of ten and came running towards me with her gun.

"I won't shoot," she cried.

"I'm afraid you must, Esther. After all, you're not hurting anybody; and look, all your friends in the Company are going to shoot."

"But I can't, I can't." Tears were streaming down her cheeks and she was excited and afraid. "Lieutenant Ariel," she sobbed, "you can punish me, you can do anything you like to me, but I won't press the trigger."

I led her aside. The rest of the Company lay on their stomachs awaiting orders.

Esther was afraid. I could have given her dozens of good reasons why her fear was ridiculous, but I knew that reasons would not help her—nor would anger. She was afraid, and deep

inside me I knew that her fear was something I could not cope with.

What was fear?

I remembered my father asking me if I was afraid of anything and my saying. "Yes, Father, of death"; but death was obvious, not immediate and somehow worthy of fear. I had never known fear of the dark, or of being alone, or of being at a height or somewhere deep down. I feared death and I feared my father, in a way. And after the experiences of last night I had discovered a new fear, the fear of being unable to cope with a situation, the fear of being in want of something I had never before thought could be lacking—tenderness, kindness, and gentleness.

"Is it the noise that frightens you," I asked Esther, "or the kick of the gun when you fire?"

"No, it's neither." She shrugged. "I don't know. I only know I won't shoot. I'm afraid—"

Afraid. She was afraid, and not ashamed of admitting it.

Thoughts rushed through my mind as I stood there with Esther. My father, I remembered, had no fears at all. In that he differed greatly from me. But he could not be called a courageous man because he had no fears to overcome. He knew nothing of the hesitations of fear; the quick trembling, the loud heartbeats, the paleness, the shaking hands, the sudden ache that freezes all the body.

As my thoughts ran on I took no notice of Esther, whose white face stared up at me expectantly.

I realized that I, too, was capable of fear, but not capable of admitting it, even to myself.

I turned quickly to the girl.

"Esther," I said. "You needn't shoot. But for appearance's sake you must take your place in the line. We'll remove the bullets from your gun and you can just follow the order and press the trigger at the right time. Will that satisfy you?"

She was grateful and took her place with the others. I ex-

tracted the bullets from her gun, but at the last minute decided to leave one in the magazine, ready to be fired. I passed the gun to Esther, who held it lightly, aiming at the target. I leaned down and put my own finger on hers, as it softly touched the trigger.

"Come," I whispered, "let's see what happens."

Then I shouted the order *Fire!*

Esther let out a short little scream as I pressed against her finger and she heard the unexpected crack of the gun. I looked at her inquiringly, with a smile, as if we shared a secret. Her voice trembled as she looked up at me and said, "I was surprised. It's all right, really. I was only surprised."

"Did it bother you, Esther?"

"No, it didn't, really. No, I don't suppose it did."

She looked at the gun and then, half to herself and half to me she said, "I did shoot, didn't I? I never thought I'd do that. I never thought I could."

She reloaded the magazine and for the rest of the practice gave no trouble. She had discovered that nothing much happened and there was no real problem to cope with. But something else had happened. After the incident with the gun, Esther avoided me and spoke to me only when she was spoken to. A barrier had grown up between us. I had broken a promise to her and although the outcome had been useful to her, she felt that she had been tricked. It was a queer situation because it was also evident that she was thankful for what I had done. I gave up thinking about it.

"Explain to your recruits what love of their country means. Make them understand the oath and the values that lie behind it.

"Form of explanation: Lecture or general discussion. Time: Two hours."

The printed instructions referred to the hours immediately before the ceremony of taking the oath.

Love of country, I thought to myself. Start by explaining love, I suppose. But how can one? A person either feels it or doesn't. And "the values behind it"—What are those values in relation to the part of the oath which calls upon a soldier to "sacrifice his life, if need be"?

The evening before the ceremony I took the Company outside the camp grounds and sat them in a circle on the dry, yellow grass. They looked indifferent, careless, and as if it were all the same to them whether they heard a lecture about how to handle a machine gun or about sacrificing their lives for love of their country. I felt unsure of myself and hardly knew how to start.

"I'll tell you a story," I began at last. "Forget for a moment that you are in the army or in uniform. Sit comfortably, or lean back and imagine, each one of you, that you are alone with me and listening. It's a story I feel like telling."

A whisper went round the circle. There was some movement, and then they were still. Nothing could be heard except the far-away rhythm of a pumping station.

"There were two brothers a long time ago who had no home and no family. They were not rich or handsome. They were strong and industrious, however, and worked from an early age to earn their living. One day they came across a small case which had belonged to their parents, or so they were told; in it they found a map, and on the map a house was drawn, and inside the house was written the word 'home.'

"The two brothers said little. They studied the map, booked their passages, and went to look for the house marked 'home.' It was a very old house in a valley, far from town, and it took them a long time to get there. The road was bad, and they began to feel hungry and thirsty. One brother fell against a stone and was injured; the other fell ill, but one way and another they man-

aged to struggle through the days and nights and at length came to the house.

"Perhaps they had been walking all their lives. Anyway, they had begun to look old and their hair had turned white, and the map they were following was yellow with age before they got to the spot marked on it. Their feet had been burned by hot stones on the road and frozen by winter frosts. But there they were at last, at the house in the valley, and it was not empty.

"There were people inside who laughed at the two brothers, threw stones at them, and ordered them away. But while they were standing there, in front of the house, something curious happened—"

Here I paused a moment, then continued:

"They noticed more people coming into the valley; coming with aged yellow maps in their hands, their eyes straining desperately towards the house.

"The elder of the two brothers went up to the people coming into the valley, gathered them together, and with them worked out a plan. This was home and they had to get into it. They had no weapons. They were dressed in plain cotton robes, but they moved forward in a steadfast line towards the house in the valley from which, now, shots were coming. Many of those moving forward with the brothers fell, their hands still grasping the yellow maps. But the procession went on, towards the house, and into the house. When at last they got into the house they found it empty because the enemy had fled to the mountains beyond.

"The two brothers died. The people they had led died. But sons and daughters had been born. And when a new son or daughter was born, the story of the two brothers and the simple people marching relentlessly through all their lifetime to the place marked on a map as home—that story was told. The sons and daughters would come together and swear to give their lives, too, if need be, to preserve the home that their fathers had come

so far, and so humbly, to find, and had fought for so hard in their cotton robes.

"You are the new daughters born to that house."

They got up from the yellow grass, fell into line, and marched back to camp.

Tamar came to me and said, "Ariel, how many do you go through in a day?"

She was talking about interviews with the girls in my Company. I had to interview them for classification purposes. I sat in a small room with a table and two chairs, and a girl came in. There I was, Ariel, and what amounted to a naked person on the other side of the table, a girl who came in, saluted, and then left me all her problems, her loves, her hatreds, and her anxieties. During that classification process I began to realize that others existed and had problems, besides Ariel Ron. I couldn't help being interested, although there were times when the whole think made me feel foolish, even worthless.

I, who had never known hunger or pain, never escaped from real danger, never had problems except those I chose to make for myself, found myself sitting at a table listening, and not merely listening to but also understanding, women who had gone through so much, whose parents had been killed before their eyes, who had been sent out to brutal work while they were still children. I sat listening, commenting now and then, nodding my head as they rattled on, or breaking in with advice. A sheet of paper was before me and a pencil in my hand. The paper was hardly big enough for all the notes that had to be written.

There were all kinds of girls, including the simple ones who were happiest when close to the earth, who sought out no riddles to solve and no excitements to amuse them, but who were honest, good, and straightforward.

Day after day they came before me, the simple ones and the complicated ones, to be transferred to sheets of paper and scrambled together—the all-confiding, all-confessing units collectively known as Company A.

I began to feel that it was too much for me. From interviewing eight or ten a day I dropped to three or four. I found myself becoming involved in each story, living in the homes of the girls, walking with them along their streets, talking to their friends. They had been merely regimental numbers but now they were becoming terribly alive, almost frighteningly so. They began to impress themselves upon me as people, as human beings, and just as alive, as sensitive, and as beset by problems as I was.

The more involved I became the more angry I grew with myself. I began to feel out of place, and when the last day of my command dawned, I woke with a sense of enormous relief.

After the last day's parade, the Commander of the camp called me to her office for a short talk. I saluted—it had now become a habit—and then we shook hands.

"Well, Ariel?" She had a disconcerting way of beginning a conversation, and I always felt like replying, "Well, what?" Instead, I felt at ease on this last day, and said casually:

"I suppose I shall be leaving your camp today for a short leave, and then a new job."

"I suppose so," she replied, "unless you would prefer to stay here."

"Good heavens, no! Go through all that again?"

She smiled, as if we shared a secret, and said, "You know, Ariel, this is probably the only place in the army where you would feel yourself to be of real value, with authority and responsibility and getting worth-while results."

"But I don't want to work in a crowd of people."

"You're still afraid, aren't you? The crowd, as you call it, began to interest you, and that made you fearful. You know,

Ariel, you can't escape taking a deep interest in the people you command or work with. Well?"

That "well?" of hers always put me off balance.

"I don't want to stay here," I said. "It wasn't a bad experience, but I've had enough of it. Perhaps I can't afford it emotionally."

Both irony and anger were in her smile.

"Can't afford it! Do you think you will always be able to pick and choose, even where duty is concerned? There are so many things people can't afford to do, if they consider their own interests selfishly. But they do them. All the same, I wish you luck. You did an excellent job here. Let me know how you get along in your new post."

I saluted and went out, and a few minutes later, with my kitbag over my shoulder, left the camp. I felt I could not "emotionally afford" to say good-by to anyone else.

It was a long walk to the bus station, and I was glad to get there and climb into a seat and be carried upwards along the twisting road that climbs the Judaean mountains. It was growing dark when Jerusalem came into sight. The lights of the city looked like frightened eyes peering from the lap of a hill.

"You are to report to Major Golan's office, second door on the left."

This was no longer a capricious game. This was the army at its cold, hard, routine work, not a pack of helpless women with problems, but trained men, responsible and severe.

I knocked at the door of my future C.O., Major Golan, went in, saluted, and sat on the chair he pointed to. He went on looking at some papers, a tall, gray-haired, slightly bald man who, to judge from the way his uniform hung about him, paid only a minimum of attention to appearances.

He lifted his eyes, stretched out his hand to grasp mine firmly, and at once began explaining my duties. He spoke quickly, and

after every sentence added "Understand?" without waiting to know whether I understood or not.

"You'll get special jobs," he said. "You will report only to me. Understand? This is our area"—he pointed with a stick to a red-bordered area on the map—"You will work alone, and keep your own hours. I'm only interested in results. Understand? If it takes you one or five days is of no interest to me. But bring me the reports at the end of each job. Understand? I'm not difficult. I like honesty and hard work. Don't antagonize me. When you are in camp see that I get coffee every few hours and that you have a cup with me. You will have a vehicle at your disposal. Can you drive?"

"Yes, Major."

"Call me Dov. And don't salute me unless senior officers are present. And when you are in the field you needn't tie your hair up. When you have difficulties, bring them to me. Captain Shoul Manor, my assistant, will try to make passes at you. Don't let him. Don't wreck the jeep. And now go off and get friendly with the cook and ask the kitchen corporal to bring me some coffee. Understand?"

He winked and took some cakes out of a drawer in his desk. I learned later that they were always kept there in readiness. In camp it was said: "Major Golan? You can bribe him with a cream bun."

This was my introduction to the new job, which I found unusually interesting. It took me all over the countryside and left me far more independent than I had ever expected to be. Major Golan realized that it was not much use putting me in an office. One of his staff told me that he had said, "Ariel? Tie her to a chair and she'll produce nothing. Let her go free and she'll get better and quicker results than any of you men." I tried to do so, and often did.

I grew to love my "area"—the one red-bordered on the map. I knew every hill, every wady and unused road, almost every tree. My jeep could manage every track I put it to, and the

round Judaean hills with their naked rocky tops, and the hidden valleys with neglected fruit trees and dark caves became part of my everyday life.

The work was refreshing, healthy, and satisfying. The recruit camp, the sorrows of Esther and Judith, the dreary morning exercises and the disturbing interviews, dropped from my mind as I sped along the mountainsides in my open jeep, talked to people about things that mattered, or kept vigil at a mountain station, going to the telephone every now and then to announce some event. There was always something worth doing.

Time passed rapidly, the warm days thinned out, and winter came, with its long, dark nights.

Captain Manor did his best to flirt, as the Major had warned me, but without success. I worked hard, studied when I could, only rarely took leave to visit my parents, and tried to think as little as possible of my own problems.

Jerusalem, which was nearby, is a small town and offers little excitement. It has the magnificent value of timelessness; you feel it belongs to you, and yet belongs to other generations as well. I took only an occasional and passive part in its quiet social life. I had my rooms in the town, and had been given permission to sleep there when not on duty.

One late afternoon, coming from the camp to my Jerusalem rooms when the sun was low, I saw my shadow blocking the narrow path to the door. Subconsciously, old urges must have been working in me, and I remembered my last conversation with the shadow. It stretched out in front of me now as if again it wanted to talk.

"A few words," it said. "May I?"

I nodded.

It leaned against the stone wall, long and thin, a bit vague in outline. "We share the same god," it said. "Do you remember?"

"Yes," I whispered, "the god of shadows."

"You're leading a dull life, aren't you? Not the life you were

accustomed to. You're really not very happy. Why don't you do something?"

"Do what?" I said. "Please, let me go in now."

"A moment more, Ariel," it said. "Inside the rooms you can't see me. You see, you are not really living nowadays. Time passes, and it's true that you manage to fill it in, but always at the same pace and without excitement. Don't you feel at a loss?"

"No," I said, "I do not. I'm relaxing."

"Out of choice?"

"Let me go inside," I said. "It will soon be dark and you are getting terribly long."

"You may go in. But you know, our god isn't on hand all the time. He's waiting now—a bit impatiently—until you find your old self again and learn to depend on it. You must do something."

I went to my room. . . .

I cannot say for certain whether it was my shadow, the god I share with the shadow, or my own deliberate planning that brought Peter Bend into my life as a means of "doing something," as the focus of an effort to regain the old Ariel.

By then I was almost nineteen and Peter Bend was fifty-two. He was working as a political adviser at the Foreign Ministry. I was still in the army and had another eight months of military service to do.

As a child, I had had my head patted by Peter. As a high school girl I met him at parties to which my parents had taken me. Now, nearly nineteen, I was sitting in the Café Gil in the main street of Jerusalem when he came in and took a seat not far from my table.

Several days had passed since my last talk with my shadow. The conversation came back to me as I sat reading the evening paper and drinking coffee. I could examine Peter Bend carefully from where I sat, although he could not see me clearly. He was tall and lean, and must have had a good figure in his youth; he

had preserved it well. His hair was silvery and neatly waved. His face was brown from the sun and so were his long-fingered hands. He had deep-set eyes, gray and gentle, with bushy eyebrows, a straight, fairly long nose, and lips that were well formed but a trifle thin. On this occasion he was wearing a tweed jacket and smoking a pipe.

Peter Bend was unmarried, although there were rumors that he had been married once and divorced. He had come to Israel about fifteen years before, and when the State was founded, took citizenship and went into the Foreign Ministry.

Again I have no idea whether it was the shadow's advice or my own initiative that made me get up from my chair and approach Peter's table.

"You probably don't remember me," I said.

He turned, hesitated a moment and then, smiling broadly, said, "Why, of course I do. It's Ariel Ron. Do sit with me. What will you have?"

For an hour, perhaps two hours, we sat there talking. He was interested in everything I had to say. And he talked, too. . . .

"Tell me if I bore you, Ariel. But I find you so refreshing to talk to."

He was a lonely man, absorbed in his work, and gentle, almost shy, in manner. He thought carefully before he said, "Would you—that is, if you have nothing better to do—have dinner with me this evening? Tell me frankly, Ariel. I mean, it's a bit sudden, anyway. You don't have to—"

I broke in, "I'd love to have dinner with you. Could we pass by my rooms so that I can change?"

My room was cozy and pleasant enough in summer, but it was below the level of the street, and now that winter had come, it was chilly and dark. Rain came in through the low window, and there were big blobs of dampness on the ceiling. Peter noticed the chill and the dampness and seemed worried by them.

I changed quickly, assuring Peter that he need not change.

"You're a different person without your uniform," he said as we walked towards the King David Hotel. "It's a very long time since I dined alone with a young and charming woman. I feel I should change into something more appropriate."

"Please don't. I like you the way you look now."

I rested my hand on his arm.

"May I call you Peter?"

"Please do, Ariel. Take my arm and call me Peter. It's very pleasant."

The dinner was good. And if ever two people drew into a close, warm friendship over dinner and coffee, those two were Peter Bend and Ariel Ron. After dinner Peter asked me to his house for another cup of coffee. He called a taxicab and as we got in Peter nodded to the driver and said, "Home, please."

"Yes, Mr. Bend," said the driver, who smiled, and may have noticed that I was still holding Peter's arm.

The cab pulled up at a cottage in the southern part of the town. A big, brown dog welcomed us.

"Bingo, meet Ariel," said Peter.

Bingo sniffed curiously around me and then led us through a garden and up some steps into the house. Bingo and I became great friends later on.

Peter lit a fire in the open grate and made coffee. The room quickly became warm and pleasant. I removed my shoes and settled myself on a low sofa. The room was a big living room, with a fireplace, a few comfortable armchairs, the sofa on which I had sprawled, a couple of small tables, and at the far end a desk. A few old maps and one good reproduction of a Modigliani hung on the walls. Small table lamps threw a soft light that completed the homey atmosphere.

"How different from my room," I said to Peter. "Lucky you. I don't suppose any rain comes through your windows."

"Why do you live in those rooms of yours if you don't like them?"

"I can't find better ones. I wish I could. It's so damp in winter

that I wake up every morning with all kinds of aches. Is this house very large?"

"Well, it's biggish for Jerusalem. On this floor there's this room and a couple of bedrooms, a dining room, a kind of library-study where I sit a lot and, of course, a kitchen and bathroom. Downstairs . . . now, wait a minute"—he paused, thinking, and then went on—"I've an idea." He shook his head and laughed. "But no . . . it's really a crazy idea."

He went on talking and drinking thick, hot Turkish coffee. It was nearly midnight when I suggested that I should go home. Peter agreed.

"It is rather late," he said. "I hope I didn't keep you too long. I can't tell you how wonderful the evening has been for me. I can hardly believe it's happened."

He telephoned for a taxi and when it came, said shyly, as when he had asked me to dine with him, "Ariel, will you ring me when you have nothing better to do? Perhaps you could come again, for tea or coffee, one day?"

"Of course I will. Thank you for a delightful evening."

The dog had come down with us and I stroked its coat.

"Good-by, Bingo. I'll be seeing you again."

Peter and I were standing together at the gate, and in a matter-of-fact way I turned my cheek for him to kiss. He did so, his hands holding my shoulders.

"Good-by," he whispered, "and bless you."

I got back to my rooms, made myself another cup of coffee, and tried to work things out. It seemed to me that a lot had happened during the evening. This odd man, Peter Bend—I liked him, of course, but I found it difficult to believe that anyone could be so utterly good, gentle, warm, and somehow complete, as he seemed to be. He had all the qualities that I had set myself to prove were nonexistent in people. This provoked all my own hostile, opposite qualities.

I knew that he would fall in love with me if I let him, because I represented something he had either never had or had been without for a long time.

Why should I oppose his good qualities?

My inner voice said: I must prove it. Prove what? Prove that a man cannot be so complete, show that he can be as easily hurt as anyone else, and that he can, in fact, be broken?

Scheming again, was that what I wanted? All right, call it scheming. Scheming is the sauce that makes life taste good. He'll fall in love with me, and if he does he'll love me dearly, and so be utterly broken when I want to break him. I want to see his calm, kind face bitter and angry. I want to see the soft gray eyes flinch and the hands shake.

And then what? I'll list it as one of my achievements.

In a way, it'll be a kind of revenge. Against what? He's never done me the slightest harm, it's true, but Ned and Bill and others have hurt me. Once I know that in fact all men are exactly the same, I won't feel so deeply the hurt any one of them may do me. It will be a revenge—for the many defeats I have suffered unfairly.

Supposing I get fond of him, if I fall in love with him as I've never been in love before? What then?

No donger of that. I shall be too absorbed in my schemes of acquiring power over him and proving my case.

One day, Ariel, you'll realize that you are misusing the term power and misjudging what strength really is. It takes very little of either to break a man, and once he's broken it doesn't prove that you've gained in power or strength. Perhaps he'll guess what I'm trying to do? No, he'll love me too much to let his thoughts run on those lines.

I'll go ahead with the game. I've been playing it for quite some time, but I won't be able to go on with it forever.

I stopped talking to myself, angrily said good night to the pillow, and switched off the lights.

A week later I moved to the downstairs flat in Peter Bend's house. I telephoned my parents:

"I've moved to Bend's house—you know, the F.M. man. It's downstairs, quite self-contained, with a separate entrance and a small kitchen. It's paradise."

"Why did you move?"

"He said he was looking for a tenant. It was empty and useless to him so he won't take any rent. As you know, my old rooms are wretchedly damp and cold."

"Are you sure it will be all right?"

"Of course it will. Why not?"

"I don't know. It worries me a bit. Do you see much of Bend? He's not exactly your age."

"I see something of him, since he's my landlord. Anyway I like it here and I intend to stay. . . ."

That ended the conversation. My parents were obviously not enthusiastic about my move, but even that was a helpful factor. They wouldn't like it or where it was leading, and that would give me a chance to prove my independence.

At first there were complications. I liked Peter and found it unnecessary to leave the house except for work. We breakfasted together upstairs, reading the newspapers. Then I drove away with Bingo, the dog, who grew to like his excursions in the jeep. After I got back in the evenings we had a drink together before dinner, which I cooked. Then we talked for an hour or so and I went off downstairs to my rooms.

Sometimes he would look at me intently for a long time, without saying anything, and then approach me, put his arm on my shoulders, and say, "You are a blessing."

We had much more in common than I had expected. I found myself enjoying the things I did for him, preparing his meals, doing his household shopping on my way back from work, instructing the maid. I did them without realizing that I was form-

ing a set of habits that might tie and bind me to him as much as they were tying and binding Peter to me.

During dinner one night he talked to me. He was nice, but his words sounded as if they came from a distant planet.

He had been married once; his wife had been killed by the Germans during the war. At first this was why he made Israel his home; she had been Jewish, and had died because of it. He was not, and he came to live here.

"I have had no affairs since my wife died. I was simply not attracted to anyone, but then you came along, and everything changed, and I can't think any more.

"You see, it's not a passionate love; it's a love of esteem, and fundamental like bread or water or air. Just let it be; I won't hurt you. I lie upstairs and I know you are there below, and I talk to you, and you even answer, and I have to be very strong not to go down and take you in my arms. . . .

"Sorry dear, I didn't mean to deliver a speech. Let's listen to the news."

One night something happened that brought about a change. There was a bad thunderstorm. I lay in bed, half afraid, and could not sleep. The forked lightning seemed to be coming straight through my window at my bed. The thunder was like the crack of doom. It shook the house. I hid under the sheet, switched on all my lights; but I still felt like a terrified child. I had to have company.

I put on my dressing gown and hurried up the outside stairs, my hair getting wet and my feet slipping on the wet stairs. I went into the main part of the house through the kitchen door and into Peter's bedroom. He was sitting up in bed in dark green pajamas, smoking a pipe, and listening to the storm. He got up when I came in and held me as though I was a frightened child.

"I'm afraid, Peter. The thunder and lightning are awful."

"Relax now. I'm with you, darling."

Darling . . . the word sounded strange to me. He repeated it,

stroked my hair, and helped me off with my dressing gown. Neither of us spoke and I was cold and frightened. He took me to the big double bed and I lay next to him, relaxed by the tenderness of his handclasp, and fell asleep. He lay awake the whole night, holding my hand.

When the morning came, he smiled broadly at me and said, "Sleep well?"

"Thanks, I did."

The storm had gone and there was a blue sky, over which small gray clouds slid swiftly.

That morning I moved my things upstairs. It seemed silly to go back to my own bed. Day by day I watched Peter's love grow in strength. It was a wholesome, good love, and to some extent I found myself becoming emotionally involved in it. We were, by most people's reckoning, "living together" now. People would doubtless say: "Have you heard? Ariel Ron lives in his house." Friends would ask: "Is it true?" And the inner Ariel would comment to herself:

"You really are getting involved. You'd better watch out. You are beginning to care for him. Perhaps you won't be able to conquer what is true and strong and honest in him, after all. Why don't you learn from this, and from him?"

Then came a sequence of events that almost proved my whole philosophy wrong.

Several opportunities occurred for behaving in a way that would hurt Peter, feed my revenge, and liberate myself from these new and disturbing feelings of respect and care and warmth, which he had aroused.

The first one came on a Saturday night. We had met again on a Saturday, so every time that day came round we celebrated; we went out to a more elaborate dinner, dressed ourselves more formally, or dined at home on some special dish I had cooked, eating at a candle-lit table, with a bottle of good wine.

I remember that on this particular Saturday night we had had one of our special meals at home. The table had been cleared

and we were sitting relaxed in front of a good fire, talking. Peter said he loved me. I knew that he loved me. He said he loved me as few men could ever have loved a woman.

"But don't let it worry or bother you," he added. "You don't have to respond. You are in no way committed to me. When you want to pack up and go, just pack up and go. I shall go on loving you, and always be at hand if you need me."

"But I'm really no good, Peter," I said. "I don't deserve that kind of love. You don't know how horrible I am, or can be; how unworthy. I can ruin almost anything beautiful, especially a relationship."

"Yes, darling. I know. You will go on planning your little schemes and enjoying them. I know you quite well, but I also know an Ariel who is better than gold."

At that moment the telephone rang and I jumped up to answer it. It was Mel. And Mel was an opportunity. "Better than gold," was I? I said into the telephone, "Mel, my dear. How nice to hear your voice. I must see you. Are you free this evening?"

He was.

"Then let's go to a dance. I'll come over right away."

I hung up and looked at Peter out of the corner of my eye. He was sitting quite still. He had heard the conversation, or my end of it. He could not have avoided hearing. He was aloof and quiet, smoking his pipe and gazing at me.

Victoriously I announced, "I'm going out. Do you mind?"

"Have a good time, dear. And take your coat. It's a bit cold tonight."

"I'll be late," I said.

"That's all right. Don't make too much noise when you come back."

I dressed, called good night to Peter, and went off to meet Mel. We went to a club and danced, but I was unable to get rid of the sight of Peter, sitting there by the fire. The tone of his voice when he spoke to me had not changed. It had been

exactly the same as when he had said that the Ariel he knew was as good as gold. Dancing with Mel, I could not help wishing that I had stayed at home. But this was part of a plan I had sworn to carry through and I was determined not to weaken. Mel and I danced until late. When I returned to Peter, slightly damp from the light rain that had begun to fall, I found him asleep and got quietly into bed. I expected to find a note telling me to sleep downstairs; at the very least I expected him to waken and turn his back upon me. Instead, he took my hand and murmured sleepily, "It's good to have you back. I missed you. Sleep well."

He never mentioned the incident again.

It was not only my growing fondness for Peter that complicated matters—and provoked me to fight against him—it was also the forming of everyday habits which I found myself liking. If there was one thing I had always feared, it was that I would lose my complete freedom and self-control. At all times I was careful to keep control of myself. I never took more than one drink and never allowed myself to step beyond a certain line drawn in my imagination. The fear of losing control as I defined that quality, drove me to look for opportunities to prove to myself and to Peter that I could rise above, or evade, the fondness that was growing between us. The more I found myself caring for him, the more eager I was to prove my superiority to such fondness. I was like someone who spoils a cake because he knows that after eating it he will want another, and is not sure that he can get it; or like a dog that barks furiously at a cat to frighten it away because it knows that in a fair chase the cat will get away.

Before long, two more opportunities came for showing the indifference I thought I should feel. The first was connected with my work. One of the jobs I did was receiving new immigrants on their arrival at the village that had been prepared for

them. I had to make sure that they were given a sense of friendliness as they entered their new homes, and about twenty girls were under my command for this purpose.

It was an odd experience, receiving families from strange lands as they got off a bus into an environment new and unfamiliar to them: the startled look in their eyes as they stepped down from the vehicle, the endless confusion and the children scuffling around in wonderment.

The villages they came to were absolutely empty, except for my girls waiting to welcome them; empty, newly-built, square, starkly-white houses, without the warmth that comes from being lived in; the bare hills around, summer heat drying the grass and shrubs. They arrived with an odd assortment of baggage, into what must have been a puzzling and uncertain environment for them. Even the language of those about them was incomprehensible. They wanted to come, but as many of them were brought by air, the change was too quick for them. Yesterday, the noisy streets of Teheran or Casablanca—today, this shadeless, naked land with the empty white houses.

I went to the villages, trying to bridge the gap, often feeling powerless to help, and often receiving a smile of thanks or a kiss from some nervous mother—less nervous and confused, perhaps, than I was.

On one of these occasions I asked Peter to come with me. At the time I had wanted to share with him the mixture of emotions I felt. I knew he would be interested, and as there were usually many other observers present—newspaper men, Jewish Agency organizers, and so on—I thought it would be nice to have him there, too, if only for my sake.

I went off early with the girls under my command. It was a hot, dry day. The new village was spread over two low hills, with piles of furniture in front of each, and a small cowshed and toolshed behind.

During the two hours before the arrival of the immigrants it was our duty to arrange the furniture in the houses, put vases

of flowers on tables, have small packets of sweets ready for the children, and a bottle of milk for the babies; even a bottle of beer for those who wanted it.

When the buses arrived and the immigrants began to get out, two or three of my army girls would take each family to its allotted house, help unpack, care for the children if necessary, and then come back and report to me.

"How can we talk to them?" I was asked. The new immigrants on this occasion came from Iran.

"Tova"—one of my girls—"understands Persian. She can move around all the time. The rest of you talk with your hands and eyes. There's water in the taps. See that it's running freely when they arrive. Just give them a good, friendly impression, that's the main thing."

The village began to look more alive. There was movement, the sound of talk and of the singing of my girls as they washed floors and arranged flowers. I moved from one house to another, helping, criticizing, and making suggestions. The square, white buildings began to look like pleasant homes. They had clean windows and floors, flowers on the table, sweets in a dish, a small rug opposite the door.

I could see that my girls were enjoying the work. It was new to them because I always insisted that each new batch of immigrants should have a fresh batch of girls.

Peter arrived with a group of visitors. I was fairly busy at the time and, after a brief Shalom, moved on. Presently I saw a man I knew among the journalists and cameramen, a newspaper man named Gideon. I quite liked him although I had not seen very much of him. The thought flashed through my mind: I'll neglect Peter today. I begged him to come and he must imagine us walking in the hills, picking wild flowers, whenever I have a few free minutes. I'll make him jealous of Gideon. They were standing together as I walked up to them and, ignoring Peter, smiled at Gideon and asked him if he would like to tour the village with me.

"I'm glad you came," I said. "Most of the preliminary work is finished now and I haven't much to do until the buses arrive."

Peter turned to look at me. I expected him to suggest that he come too, but he did not.

I walked with Gideon through the village, eagerly explaining everything. Glancing back at Peter I could see him standing observantly, smoking his pipe, his silver hair gleaming in the sun, and his face expressionless.

I took Gideon to my jeep and suggested that we drive to a neighboring village and buy biscuits for the girls in my squad. He agreed and we drove away. As we passed Peter I waved to him. He seemed to be trying to say something, but the dust of the jeep covered him and in a second he was lost to sight as we turned a curve in the road.

I was really not much interested in Gideon. I don't think he understood the situation at the new village or the reasons for what I was trying to do there. He took the whole thing as a job of work, like reporting a theft or a conference. But he was agreeable to talk to.

We bought the biscuits and as we hurried back saw, in the distance, the dust of the big buses bringing the immigrants.

The buses arrived. Weary, their faces tired, but their eyes sharply inquiring, the newcomers descended. It was my third new village, but, as on the other occasions, my feelings were stirred. They were brave people. Most of them were middle-aged. None of them had ever lived as close to the earth as they would do here. They had been small tradesmen in Teheran, Ispahan, or Tabriz; and now they had come to this new, hard land, which most Israelis take for granted as though it were a dispensation of God.

They had large families and masses of baggage. I relieved one of the mothers of her baby, and took it in my arms. Its big, black eyes looked about curiously, but unlike the eyes of its parents, they showed no sign of fear or confusion.

The first bus unloaded its passengers and luggage and then

another. We helped carry boxes, bundles, and wrapped children. All at once the village had become riotous with brightly colored dresses and shawls, which broke the monotony of white walls and khaki uniforms. These people were darker of skin and hair than most of the Israelis, and, of course, spoke no Hebrew; but somehow the two groups mixed in a friendly way.

Peter was sitting on a rock a little distance away as all this went on. He was dangling a few wild flowers in his hands and staring towards the village scene in amazement. He looked very alone, but aloof, and, in a way, younger than he really was, perhaps because of his open-necked shirt and sun-tanned skin. I wanted to go to him and say: Look at our people, look at them. I wanted to ask him whether he thought they would get used to this lonely place, and would learn to be at home in Israel. Instead, I turned to Gideon, who was very much there and took it for granted that I was intensely interested in what he was doing. He did not leave my side, tried to help me at my work, talked all the time, and commented on everything. I hardly listened to him, and avoided looking at Peter.

All at once it was over. The families had been shepherded to their new homes, the buses had gone back, and the girls of my squad came and reported their work done. By this time the sun was among the mountain tops and falling towards the sea, throwing long shadows from the telegraph poles and washing the rocks with gold. Gideon asked if he could come with us in the lorry. I agreed, waved good-by to Peter, who was going back in the car that had brought him. He called out, "See you later, Ariel. Will you be dining out?"

"Of course not, I'll be home for dinner."

I turned down Gideon's invitation, and after we got back to Jerusalem took a taxi home. Peter had had a shower, changed into comfortable clothes, and was having his usual pre-dinner drink. It all seemed homey and peaceful.

"I've heated the water for you, Ariel. Thought you might like a bath."

"Thanks," I said.

The wild flowers he had collected at the village had been arranged in a jar and placed on a stool by my side of the bed. I let him take me in his arms, and said, "You didn't have a very nice day, did you Peter? I'm sorry I was so busy."

"I had a wonderful day, Ariel. Thanks very much for suggesting that I go. You were wonderful, too, the way you arranged everything. If I were twenty years younger, I'd pack and move to Adulam with the Persians. . . ."

A few days later, when I got back from camp, I noticed a car drawn up outside the gate of Peter's house. We had an agreement that if someone visited Peter, I tried not to appear until he called me in and introduced me in such terms as: "Miss Ron lives downstairs." Then he would ask me to make coffee. Friends who came to the house often got used to seeing me there.

On this occasion I went into the bedroom to change. I left the door open and could hear voices in the living room. Someone was saying, "Look, Peter, she's no good. You don't really know her."

Then a quieter voice followed. "What you tell us about her is impressive but it's all part of a game, an act she puts on. Keep away from her. She'll hurt you badly one day. Why on earth do you do it?"

Now, of course, I was eavesdropping intently. I heard Peter say, "It's very nice of you to take an interest. But I love Ariel. I realize now that I've never really loved anyone before. To me she means the air I breathe, the bread I eat. There's nothing sentimental about it, it's not a delicate romance. It's plain, earthy, and goes very deep. Ariel does hurt sometimes, but you can't tell me I don't know her. If there's one person who does know her, it's me. That's why I can afford to let her play her little games. I think I know her even better than her parents do."

"Does she appreciate your love, Peter?"

I stopped breathing. I had recognized the voice. It was too muffled for me to be quite sure. I listened as Peter replied.

"Appreciate? What does that mean? She accepts it, and that's all that really matters. You are both very young. I've passed the time when I have to receive in accordance with what I give. She accepts my love, and I'm happy to have her about. She's life itself. She's turned this house from a lodging into a home. And besides, she can cook damn well."

"And what will it all lead to, Peter? Do you expect her to marry you one day?"

I could almost hear Peter smiling.

"Marry me? Certainly not. Why the devil should she? She'll marry someone more eligible than I am, one day. Really, you know, I've no right to ask anything of her."

"But you give her everything. You're prepared to do everything you can for her. You've never been the kind of man people talked about, not in that way, but now you don't seem to mind the scandal. People even feel sorry for you."

Peter laughed.

"Ariel can leave this house tomorrow," he said, "if she wants to, and she need never return. She will leave me one day. My feeling for her is independent of what she does, although I am stimulated and enlivened by her presence. I'm trying to prove to her a very simple fact—that her schemes and games are quite unnecessary. She's got enough in her to achieve big, good things without resorting to trickery. If my love helps her to realize this, I shall have accomplished something. Now, how about some more coffee?"

I was dressed by then. I went to the living-room door and knocked, opening the door and entering without waiting for an answer. Peter was sitting in his usual armchair. On the other armchair sat Bill and on the sofa his brother Ned. The shock almost forced me out of the room, but it was too late.

"Shalom," I said. "How are you both?"

Peter went out of the room to make more coffee. Bill smiled at me and said, "You're doing pretty well for yourself, sister. Don't spoil it."

"What have you been telling him?" I asked.

"Mostly we've listened to him. He has a very high opinion of you. We, apparently, never had the opportunity of seeing your virtues."

Ned did not speak. He sat there thoughtfully. But it was clear that they felt as uncomfortable as I did. When Peter returned they both got up and said they had to go.

Then Peter took me out to dinner. It was a quiet dinner. Neither of us said much. We returned early and went to bed. His good-night kiss was gentler than I had ever known it to be before.

Several days later David telephoned. It was a long time since I had seen him, not since the night of my seventeenth birthday, and something stirred in me when he called and said he was in town and wanted to see me.

"Come to lunch here," I said. "I'd like you to meet someone, a good friend of mine."

He agreed.

I said to Peter, "I shall be home for lunch. I'm bringing a friend of mine, or he may come soon after I get here. You don't mind having him with us for a meal, do you?"

"Of course not, Ariel."

I came home during the lunch-break and made a meal of steak, salad, fruit, and wine. I decided to sit at the head of the table with a man on each side of me.

David kissed me when he arrived. It was only a casual, friendly greeting, but I turned quickly to see if Peter had noticed. Apparently he had not. We had sherry and then sat down to eat. David knew nothing of my relationship with Peter or

of the game I was trying to play. He talked freely, recalling old times together, exchanging secret glances, being very polite to Peter, but not hiding the fact that his main interest was in me and that he would have preferred being alone with me.

At the end of the meal I stood up and said, "David, would you like to see my room?" And, turning said, "May we be excused, Peter?"

"Indeed. Enjoy yourselves."

We went downstairs. Peter was left to clear the table and wash the dishes, as it was the maid's day off. David and I sat smoking and chatting in my room, which nowadays I so rarely visited.

"May I kiss you, Ariel, now we are alone?" he asked with a smile.

"No, David, please don't."

"You seem a bit strange. What has happened to you? You're surely not in love with that man upstairs?"

"Why not?"

"Why not? If you were, you wouldn't have let me talk as I did at lunch, and you wouldn't have suggested my coming down here with you, leaving him to wash the dishes. But wait a minute! Perhaps you would."

"Don't bother about it, David. What I feel about you has really nothing to do with Peter. What was between you and me was so long ago. We're friends."

David got up and left, not angrily, but perhaps sadly. When he had gone I thought to myself: Friends! What humbug! How easily we say these meaningless words. Every woman does it. It's such an easy way out.

Please don't . . . Let's be just friends . . . We're such old friends that a love affair would spoil it . . . I'm a friend of yours and you don't want to lose my friendship, do you? . . . Love affairs are short but friendship is long . . .

All the magnificent nonsense we talk, as if friendship needed to be balanced against love. Let's be friends! As if it were con-

soling for a man to hear such words. I didn't like the humbug and didn't often indulge in it. I hated myself every time I did.

I listened for Peter's footsteps. He was moving about upstairs. I felt ashamed, as I always did on these occasions—unwilling to face him. When the time came for me to go back to work, I called out from the garden, threw him a kiss, and left him standing at the door, watching me hurry down to the jeep.

Major Golan was the first person to talk to me about it.

"Ariel, coffee! Why is there never enough sugar?"

He tried to shout and give the impression that he was a tough commander, but his childlike blue eyes always betrayed him. None of us paid much attention when he raised his voice.

"Coming, Major."

"I've told you a thousand times to call me Dov. Understand?"

I brought the coffee and he began a conversation, playing nervously with some papers as he did so.

"You've changed since you came here, Ariel," he said.

"Changed how?"

"You're quieter, less provocative. It's none of my business of course, but people are beginning to talk."

"Talk about me?"

"You know I'm on your side. But people say you are living with a man from the Foreign Ministry, Bend—isn't that his name?—I'm no moralist, but things can be done discreetly, can't they? Are you sure it's good for you, the situation I mean? Understand?"

"Dov, will you come to dinner at our house tonight?"

"What? What did you say?"

But he came. And he understood. But many others would not understand. My parents would not, I thought. My mother said to me one day, "You seem to be concentrating your social activities on one person. Or am I wrong?"

"You mean Peter? He's good for me."

"But he's so much older than you are, and you live in the same house. Surely you aren't thinking of marrying him?"

"Marrying? I don't want to marry anyone for a few years. But what has age got to do with it? I've got a home."

My mother was sad, quietly sad. I thought perhaps she might understand for a second, or was it the way I said "home" that had saddened her? One day she said, "I've never before known a man who would be likely to live with you in the same house for long. You're not the kindest girl in the world, and not particularly faithful, I presume."

"Ask Peter why he bears with me. Anyway, I'm happy and it's my affair."

That was something about which my father strongly disagreed. But he preferred not to say anything. Neither he nor my mother thought it would last long. My army service was coming to an end, and they thought my affair with Peter would end with it. They never visited the house, but on the other hand they made no effort to force me away from it. Then the trees began to shed their leaves. It was autumn, and my two years' army service was nearly at an end.

A few days before my release from the army I had one of the long conversations Peter and I sometimes went in for.

"What will you do next, Ariel?" he asked.

"Sleep, Peter. Do nothing for a while. And—I don't want to hurt you, but it's really your fault on the whole—I want to go off somewhere alone for a time."

To my surprise he was happy to hear this.

"You're quite right, Ariel. Why don't you go abroad? A friend of mine here, a Frenchman, has a cottage in western France, somewhere on the Atlantic. He's offered it to me several times. I'm sure he'll let you have it for a few months. Do you think you could be alone there?"

"Yes, I do. And it will be a break for you, too. You must suffer tortures. Even my mother tells me that."

"Silly Ariel, you're the gentlest person I have ever known. You just don't realize how good you are, or how valuable. I wish I could convince you."

"You can't. I know I'm no good. I know you've been warned against me, and the warnings were justified. I'm strong and firm, perhaps. But not good or kind. You're the one who has to wake up."

He laughed.

"Well, we'll see."

That night I left the house before dinner, telling Peter that I would be late. I was haunted by words and sentences he had used. He could not be right. If he were, then all that I had tried to cultivate and build up within me had been untrue and false, and all my values were wrong. I must prove to him that I was really wicked, and let him throw in my face the "real self" he imagined. Then, as others had done, he would lose his calmness and his belief in me, and I would have the satisfaction—if satisfaction it could be called—of knowing that he realized I was no good.

It seemed to me a good idea to make him think I had been making love to another man. He would believe me if I told him that I had. He would imagine me spending several hours in another man's bed, and then, wickedly, shamelessly, coming back late at night to him. His pride would not be able to take it.

I went alone to a restaurant and had dinner, and then went on to the movies, where there was a picture about the Wild West. My thoughts were not on it, and the dialogue, composed for the most part of shots, was only a disturbing background to my talks with myself.

"I'll go to this Atlantic cottage, whatever happens. I'll go away. My shadow and the god we share will be with me. I'll

miss Peter, but he loves me too much. He is too good for me, too naive, or pretending to be; besides, I don't want to be redeemed."

People began leaving the theatre. The lights were on and I realized that it was time for me to go.

I went to Mel's place. He was playing the flute to entertain some friends. I had a glass of wine and then started home. The wind blew at my skirt, tossed the leaves from the trees, and raised the dust from the pavements. Jerusalem must go to sleep earlier than any other capital city in the world. The long streets and the old stone buildings were strangely silent. The click-click of my high heels echoed against the walls. Every now and then, by the light of a street lamp, my shadow appeared momentarily, and seemed to be laughing. I was alone again.

My shadow spoke sternly to me now. "You are stupid, Ariel," it said. "The fact that you were not with a man tonight is enough to prove what you are trying to disprove. Do you know why you were not with a man?"

"I didn't feel like it," I answered.

"Don't fool yourself," my shadow said. "You cannot be with another man. You'd better realize it. You just cannot. You are fighting a new sensation inside you. You are afraid to admit the existence of the sensation or to name it. There is no need to. Did you ever see your eyes when you look at Peter, when he's not looking at you? Did you never pay attention to the care with which you prepare each meal, or choose a tie for him, or dial his number to say you've been delayed at work?"

I tried not to listen and I tried to tell myself that this was only just me talking to myself. But it did no good. I forced myself to walk on.

"Shall I tell you what will happen?" my shadow continued. "No, I'd better not. It will come as a surprise to you, a necessary surprise."

The house was silhouetted against the cloudy sky as I came

to the gate. The few olive trees in the garden seemed stagey and dramatic. The moon shone on the metal of the gate and on the white stone steps leading to the terrace.

I opened the outer door carefully and took off my shoes. A cloud had hidden the moon and the house was deep in darkness. I climbed the stairs, trying to avoid noise, and came to the main door. Don't let it creak, I prayed, and quietly opened it. Peter probably didn't hear a sound, but as I came through the door I seemed to be making a terrifying din. I closed the door softly, put my shoes in a corner, and quickly took off my coat and light dress, letting both fall to the floor in disorder. Now there was the bedroom door to open, and then the process of getting into bed and looking as if I had been there for hours. Then, if he woke up he would simply turn round, without even looking at his watch. Perhaps he wouldn't wake.

I opened the door carefully. The heavy curtains in front of the bedroom windows made it difficult to see anything. My hands searched in the darkness for a nightgown. Then I turned towards the bed, and frowned. Against the darkness I could see the glow of Peter's pipe, and a weak, white area of smoke about it. I put into my voice all the casualness I could muster.

"Good evening, darling. Did I wake you?"

I went on talking, partly to avoid comment and grateful not to have met his dark gray eyes.

"Why aren't you asleep? I'm terribly sorry if I woke you."

Then I stopped. It was his turn. I waited for him to say something or to shout at me. I even hoped he would. I was afraid of the quietness of his voice and would have preferred him to be angry and ask embarrassing questions I could answer sharply. I wanted him to be torn and broken, and to be a man of impulse and jealousy as I believed that all men were. I even expected him, in the end, to say quietly, "Will you please pack and leave the house."

But he was silent. I felt my stomach contract, and there was a terrible dryness in my throat. My feet seemed rooted to the

floor. He continued to smoke for a few minutes, and then put his pipe aside and said, "Where have you been?"

"With a man."

I smiled silently, although not as happily as I had expected to. But all my hopes of revenge and protest, all my desires to break his calm and humiliate him because I couldn't compete with his goodness seemed to be coming true. He was a superior man, a much better person than I, much stronger and so lovable, pitted against me, a child-woman; but at last I was really hurting him, arousing jealousy and pain, showing him that his love was no more unselfish than anybody else's. I went on slowly and quietly, "It's not much use lying, is it? It's well after midnight. I was with another man tonight."

I was prepared to move. I waited for something to explode. I thought I could hear the beating of his heart through his light pajamas. I couldn't see his face but hoped that the blood had rushed to his head and that his normally kindly eyes had an animal expression. But all I could hear was the tick-tick of the electric clock, counting the seconds in the heavy, tense darkness of the room.

He got out of bed and came up to me. His arms were stretched out and he drew me near to him, whispering, "You darling Ariel, you're such a child. Come and get some sleep. You'll feel better tomorrow."

He laughed.

"You know," he said, "once upon a time a woman tried to keep my love, by all means, fair and foul. Now you're trying to break my love for you. The first one didn't succeed, and you won't succeed either. Look, sweet, true love won't do you any harm. You try to open doors with a hammer, and bang your head against them, when all the time the doors are unlocked. Don't spend all your life trying to climb walls when there are open gates to go through to the other side, and nice, flower-bordered paths to walk up instead of the broken bottle glass on the top of the wall, that tears your skin.

"Come, my dear, let's sleep. I'm tired. You are very young, and I love you very much. One day you will learn not to climb mountains merely for the sake of descending afterwards, but because the climb is worth while and the view at the top magnificent."

He drew me into bed. We lay there and he continued talking, half to himself and half to me.

"Sweet Ariel, hurting people isn't a victory, and not being easy to hurt is nothing to be proud of. I am hurt, of course, I am hurt because I'm alive. You hurt me often and a great deal. But I let you do it because I believe in the real Ariel, and not even you can deform her. Why don't you try to give people happiness? You'll find it just as challenging, and much more difficult; but you'll also find that you can do it. The inferior people are not the humble ones. It's because I know I am strong that I let you trample on me.

"Don't cry. Take my handkerchief and come closer to me.

"Ariel, you want to rule, to control, and to dominate. The other day you said to me, 'Peter, you enrich me!' That moved me, dominated me, and tied me to you more than anything else, much more than all your tricks could do.

"Now stop crying. It's terribly late. That's better . . . "

A month later I said good-by to Peter. I was free of the army and was going abroad to be alone. Peter and I said little to each other that last day.

"You'll miss me Peter, won't you? I shall not be away very long."

"Yes, Ariel, I shall miss you. My love will always be waiting for you. Remember what I told you the other night about doors and walls."

"Yes, Peter, I will remember."

"Good luck, darling. Take care of yourself."

"Shalom, Peter."

At a very high altitude over the Mediterranean I could hear my inner voice again. It was a short conversation. My shadow crept out, elongating itself on the floor of the airplane, settling against the back of the chair opposite me.

"Hello, new person," it said.

"Are you talking to me?"

"Yes, Ariel," it said. "But just to say good-by. Our ways separate now, it seems. Pay no more attention to me. We don't share the same god any more. You've developed a substance and found a real god. I'm just a shadow. Perhaps I've changed a bit, too. I'm not as dark as I was. And I'm just a follower. And by the way," it asked, "where are we going?"

"To a place where the ocean roars and the seagulls fly in circles."

"Are you happy, Ariel?"

"Very, very happy. Beautifully happy. Important things have happened to me since we last talked. I *did something*—remember, you told me I should do something. I've learned to get down on my knees. And maybe I've learned to love."

Fasten your seat belts. No smoking. The notices appeared above the door. Below was autumnal Paris. The plane circled and then dipped, landing smoothly. I took a taxi to the railway station and spent the night on a train, arriving in Finistère early the next morning.

More wood on the fire. Still a few letters to write; and perhaps then, if it is not too late, I shall walk out beyond the lighthouse.

I wrote to Peter. I write to Peter every day. And I'm always afraid that the postman, when he comes, will not have with him those square blue envelopes which are Peter's.

And I must write to my mother and father. Must? I want to.

There is a piano concerto coming through the radio. All is

quiet. The window glass separates the noise outside from the silence within. Only the dim roar of the waves belongs on both sides. And the beam of light revolving steadily.

I do want to write to my parents. The words seem to stream out.

Very dear Father and Mother; and a warm kiss to Gal,

I don't quite know how to begin, realizing as I do that I have never before really written a letter *home*.

But when you sit at the end of the earth, and of a period, and become so aware of yourself as to face your own image—more than that, your real God—then, somehow, you also become aware of truth. It's only now that I begin to see thngs as they really are and not as they were reflected in mirrors selected at different periods to match my own desires.

I could very easily, now, as I never dared before, run with open arms and kiss you and say I love you and be proud of my love, of tears, of homesickness, as I'm proud of being alive, of looking upon something beautiful, of believing in things and people.

It has taken me a long time and many teasing experiences and great effort—excuse me a moment. I must put some more wood on the fire—You see, Mother and Father, one creates other people in the image that suits one best. Or that is what I have been doing. I thought it easier to believe in Father's hardness than in his love for me, so I ignored the love. And you, Mother, it was easy to believe you to be weak and in need of me, when really it was I who was in need of you; and you, perhaps, the strongest of us all.

It was easy to say to myself that I never had a real home, and so to blame and accuse instead of trying to justify and defend myself. What is a home? I think it's something within one. There were times when I could feel at home in camp, in my room. There have been times when I have felt at home here, in

this cottage. Home is hardly a matter of choice. It is not something one builds with stones and mortar. It is a natural thing like the earth, like the foam of the sea, like the roots of a tree sending up shoots. Home is a good meal and a bath after a long day, and bed, and the small group of people who love one whatever one may do or be. Home is the laughter in Gal's eyes, and Daddy's kiss when I come in, and Mother's sorrow. None of us is above that, or under it, or merely an observer of it—positions in which I so often tried to put myself.

It was easy for me to think of you, Daddy, as busy and remote and stiff. It made it easier for me to acquire a sense of independence that I now realize I didn't want; to believe in a "personality" I never really achieved, to set myself up as a person in my own right, independent of family and environment.

The beam of light from my lighthouse, here in Finistère, has done much to clean my thoughts.

Mother, now that I have taken the mask off, perhaps I am the Ariel you carried in your arms twenty years ago. Daddy, I think I have become the girl you used to read children's poems to. I am not the girl who left angrily, or the one who said in a quiet voice the other night: You didn't give me a home and therefore I have no duties there. I was foolish. There are no duties, no rights between you and me. You just *are*, both of you; and that being you, and my being your daughter, is all.

I must switch on some more light. The winter nights here are long, and there's a wind howling outside, and from the radio comes a piano concerto.

You know, darlings, I believed once, long ago it seems to me now, that discovering your faults would justify my own. Nothing that others do or don't do justifies anything. I have had to pay dearly for all the wrongs I did and, perversely, even for the few good things I did.

It's never too late to do some things. It's never too late to plant a seed in the ground, to bear a child, or to admit wrongs.

All the tears I have shed—not on your comforting shoulder—all the hours I have spent wandering about in search of warmth, when I could have had it close by, in you—all the years I spent building up a tower of control and strength—only to break it down in one night: all this was not wasted. You see, I sit now and write this letter.

Gal will be asleep, probably seeing himself a pilot in his dream. You'll bend over him and adjust the blanket and kiss him good night. You don't know it, maybe, Mother, but you'll also be kissing me tonight. And Father's rough hand will stroke my hair.

The fire dies slowly. There is a long night ahead. I shall sleep well.

All my love,
Ariel

I put the letter aside, feeling tired and curiously quiet. And threw off my dressing gown . . .

My love of the sea is like my love of Israel's Negev, with its wide, still plains and narrow wadies. The sea and the desert put one in one's place—a place of dignity, though.

Through the window I can see the Atlantic breaking against the Finistère cliffs—something that goes on forever and forever, eternally; the rock breaking off slowly, bit by bit, year after year, century after century; the flow and the ebb of the inexhaustible tide, the waves folding in and withdrawing back into the sea.

The earth outside my cottage is salty. Nothing grows there. No trees rise between me and the sea's horizon. I lead a quiet life of habit, rising early in the morning to walk along the cliff, reading, writing, preparing a lunch of fish, resting afterwards; and then the incomparably beautiful hours of early evening,

the wood fire burning, the warmth, the mind falling into memories or stretching forth to plans; or simply quiet, without thought, merely conscious of the sounds, body and spirit relaxed and united in the joy of being alone and untroubled.

And then I realize that there is no end to the happiness of the utterly free person taking conscious joy in the cool morning air, the taste of good fish, the reading of a perfect stanza in a poem, the friendliness of a room, the rough touch of woollen pajamas after a hot bath, the warmth of the bed. All these things fit into a small, bounded space that I can point to and say: "This is Ariel, at home."

It grows late. It always seems late soon after nine o'clock, when there is a deep silence over the village and no sounds except the wind and the sea. One wants everything to stop, to remain just there, at that moment. Perhaps I feel this way because I feel I am at home. Some wretched screw that has been ticking and turning vainly inside me for the past two years may now have found its place, become fitted and still, and by finding its place may have set the machine working smoothly.

I close my eyes for a few minutes and see people circling around me, constantly changing; but all at once I know that they are not changing, are not circling. They are still and it is I who change and circle, twisting and turning until, in my vision, it seems that those about me are the agitated ones.

Just as we make our own values and then create a god to match them. But now it seems that my self-made values have gone and the gods, too; and no longer can my shadow stop me, check me along my paths, and claim to share a god with me. And new values come, which are really not new at all but as old as the stones of the Negev and the waves of the sea, and requiring a new, but old and eternal, God.

As I think this out I feel a tear on my cheek; but a good tear, a proud one; and I let myself cry softly, soundlessly, humbly . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yaël Dayan (pronounced YAH-el dah-YAHN) was born on February 12, 1939, in the village of Nahalal in what is now Israel. Grammar school in Nahalal was followed by high school in Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv, and then by three years at the University of Jerusalem, where she majored in political science. She has traveled extensively in most of the European countries and in the United States, and has written for newspapers, done public relations work for the Israeli Government Tourist Office, and lectured in the United States for Israeli Bonds—this last at the age of seventeen, and just before she returned to Israel to serve her compulsory two years in the Army. She entered the Army as a private, attended officers' training school, and became a lieutenant. Although Hebrew is her mother tongue she speaks English fluently and has written this, her first novel, in English. She is the daughter of the former Commander in Chief of the Israeli Army, General Moshe Dayan.

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real emotional contact. The realization of this course of self-betrayal comes through the love of an older man, and the growing commitment to a young country which involves her whether she wishes it or not. This is a novel of extreme honesty, rare in its combination of graceful simplicity and startling insight, in its unusual evocation of the harsh and beautiful land of Israel, and in the firm power of its timeless story of growth and love.

Yaël Dayan, educated in Israel and at the University of Jerusalem, has traveled in most of the countries of Europe and in the United States, where at the age of seventeen she lectured for Israeli Bonds. She returned to Israel to enter the army as a private, attended officers' training school, and became a lieutenant. A good part of this novel was written during those years of army service—after six o'clock breakfast and before seven-thirty inspection, and later during the long night watches as an officer in a remote camp in the Jerusalem area. Although Hebrew is her mother tongue, Miss Dayan has written this, her first novel, in English.

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